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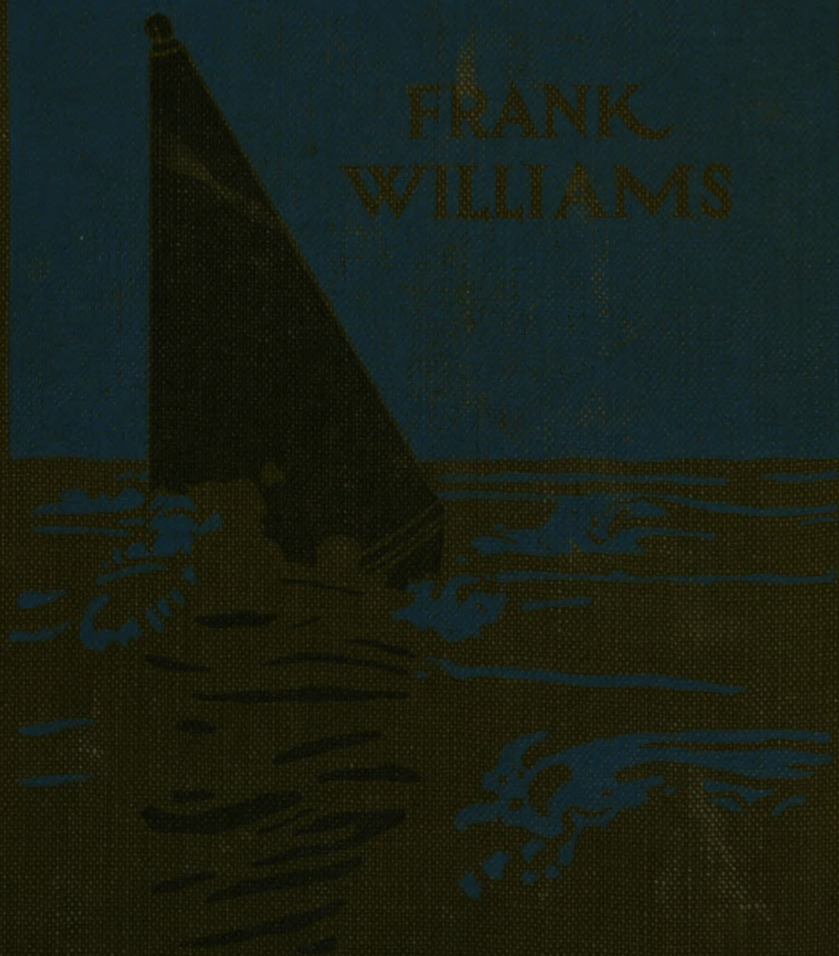
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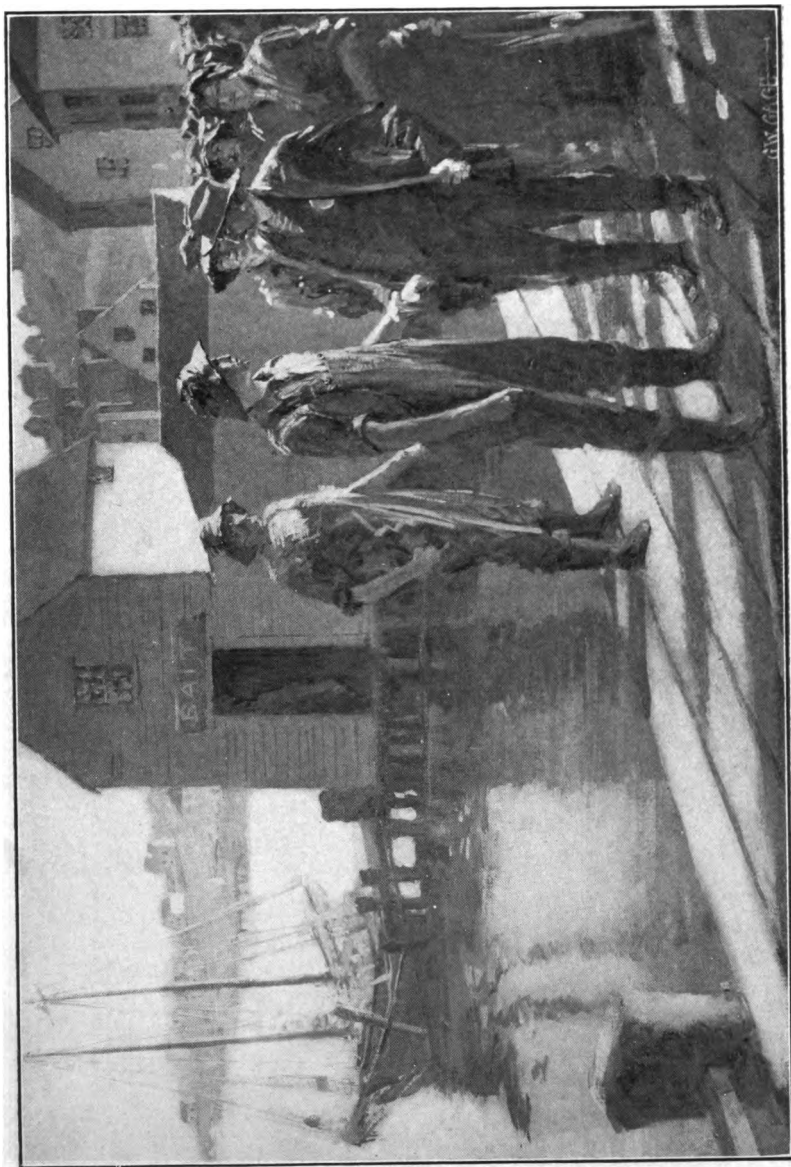
The HARBOR OF DOUBT

FRANK
WILLIAMS



kd 13632

THE HARBOR OF DOUBT



"Oh let him go!" said a voice

THE HARBOR OF DOUBT

BY
FRANK WILLIAMS

pened. by Francis Wm. Sullivan

AUTHOR OF
THE WILDERNESS TRAIL

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
G. W. GAGE



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THE HARBOR OF DOUBT

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CHAPTER I

MALICIOUSLY ACCUSED

“**L**ET them think what they like. If I had died I would have been a hero; because I lived I suppose there is nothing in the history of crime that I have not committed.”

Young Captain Code Schofield sprang out of the deep, luxurious chair and began to pace up and down before the fire. He did not cast as much as a glance at the woman near him. His mind was elsewhere. He had heard strange things in this talk with her.

“Well, captain, you know how it is on an island like this. The tiny thing of everyday life becomes a subject for a day’s discussion. That affair of six months ago was like dropping a tombstone in a mud-puddle — everything is profoundly stirred, but no one gets spattered except the one who dropped it. In this case yourself.”

Schofield stopped in his tracks and regarded his

hostess with a look that was mingled surprise and uneasiness. She lay back in a *chaise-longue*, her hands clasped behind her head, smiling up at the young man. The great square room was dark except for the firelight, and her yellow dress, gleaming fitfully in it, showed the curving lissomeness of her young body.

"Mrs. Mallaby," he said, "when you say clever things like that I don't know what to do. I'm not used to it." He laughed as though half-ashamed of the confession.

"Appreciate them," she directed shortly with a fleeting glance from her great dark eyes.

"Do you demand all my time?" he asked and flushed. The well-turned compliment caught her unawares and she admitted to herself that perhaps she had underrated this briny youth who was again beginning to interest her extremely.

But with the sally he seemed to have forgotten it and recommenced pacing the floor, his hands in his pockets and his brows knit. His mind had gone off again to this other vastly important thing.

She noticed it with a twinge of vexation. She vastly preferred the personal.

"What was it old Jed Martin said to you this afternoon?" he asked.

"That if the opinions of old sailors were of any account Nat Burns could get up a pretty good case

against you for the loss of the *May Schofield*."

"I suppose he meant his own opinion. He's an old sailor now, but if he lives to be a hundred and fifty he'll never be a good one. I could beat his vessel if I was on a two-by-four with a pillow-case for a mains'l. I can't understand why he has turned against me."

"It isn't only he, it's —"

"I know it!" he burst out passionately. "It's the whole island of Grande Mignon from Freekirk Head to Southern Cross. Not a man nor woman but has turned against me since that awful day."

"Great God! what do they think? That I wrecked the poor old *May* for the fun of the thing? That I enjoyed fighting for my life in that sea and seeing the others drown with my very eyes? Don't they suppose I will carry the remembrance of that all my life? My Heaven, Elsa, that was six months ago and I have just begun to sleep nights without the nightmare of it riding me!"

"Poor boy!"

Her voice calmed him like a touch on a restive horse, and yet he unconsciously resented the fact that it did. "I haven't been blind, Code, and I have heard and seen this thing growing. It is hard for a fisherman to lose his ship and not suffer for it afterward at the hands of inferior sailors. I've known you all my life, Code, and I believe in you now just

as I did that day in school you took the whipping I should have got for passing you a note.

"You haven't heard the last of the *May Schofield*, and you won't until you lay the ghost that has come out of its grave. But whatever you do or wherever you are, I want you to remember that I stand ready to help you in every way I can. All this"—she swept her arm about the richly furnished room—"is worthless to me now that Jim is gone, unless I can do some good for those I like. Please, Code, will you feel free to call on me if you need help?"

The flush that had receded returned with a flood of color that made his face beneath its fair hair appear very dark.

"Really, Elsa," he stammered, "that's awfully handsome of you, but I hope things won't go so far as that. I can never forget what you have said."

Elsa Mallaby had always been like that to him. Even when she married "Hard-Luck" Jim Mallaby she had always seemed to regard Code Schofield as the one man in Freekirk Head. But Jim, being too busy with his strange affairs, had not noticed.

Jim it was who, after twenty years of horrible poverty and ill-luck, had caught the largest halibut ever taken off the Banks and made thousands of dollars exhibiting it alive. And it was this same Jim who, for the remaining ten years of his life, turned to gold everything he touched.

Mallaby House was his real monument, for here, on the great green hill that overlooked the harbor, he had erected a mansion that made his name famous up and down the Bay of Fundy. And here, seven years ago, he had brought Elsa Fuller as his bride — Elsa Fuller who was the belle of Freekirk Head, and had been to Boston to boarding-school.

It was to Mallaby House that Code Schofield had come to dinner this night. He had not wanted to come and had only agreed when she bribed him with a promise of something very important she might reveal.

The revelation was hardly a pleasure. Nothing had been a pleasure to him since that day six months ago when his old schooner, dismasted and leaking in a gale, had foundered near the Wolves, two sharp-toothed islands near Grande Mignon. Four islanders had been lost that day, and he alone had lived through the surf.

"What else did old Jed Martin say, Elsa?" he asked suddenly.

She knitted her brows and stared into the fire. Why would he always go back to that?

"He said that the *May Schofield* should have been able to live out that gale easily if she had been handled right, old as she was. She *was* pretty old, wasn't she?"

"Fifty years. She was twenty when dad got her

— he sailed her twenty-eight and I had her for two.”

“ You got a good deal of insurance out of her, didn’t you, Code? ”

“ Ten thousand dollars — her full value.”

“ And you bought the *Charming Lass* with that, didn’t you? ”

“ Yes — that and two thousand that dad had saved. Why? ”

“ Old Jed Martin said something about that, too.”

Schofield’s face paled slightly and his mouth closed tightly, exhibiting the salience of his jaw.

“ So that’s it, eh? Thinks I ran her under for the insurance — the old barnacle. Is that around the island, too? ”

“ I guess it must be, or I shouldn’t have heard about it. You didn’t, of course, did you, Code? ”

“ I hardly expected you would ask that, Elsa. Why, I loved that old schooner like I love — well, my mother.”

“ I believe you, Code; you don’t need to ask that. I just wanted to hear you deny it. But you know there were some queer things about her sinking just then, when she was supposed to be in good condition. Nat Burns —”

“ Ha! So he is in it, too. What does he say? ”

“ He says that her insurance policy was just about to run out. Is that so? ”

"Yes."

There was a tone of defiance in his answer that caused her to look up at him quickly. His blue eyes were narrowed and his face hard.

"And it wasn't such a hard gale, was it?"

"No. I've weathered lots worse with the *May*. I can't explain why she sank."

"And Michael Burns, who was aboard of her, was the insurance inspector, wasn't he?"

"Yes." The reply was more a groan than a spoken word. He laughed harshly.

"I can see Nat Burns's hand in all this," he cried. "Why didn't I think of it before? He will dog me till I die because his father lost his life aboard my schooner. Oh, I had no idea it was as bad as this!"

He sank down into the chair again and stared gloomily into the fire.

"I'm glad I came to-night," he said at last. "I didn't know all these things. How long has this talk been going round?"

"Not long, Code." Her voice was all sympathy. "It is simply the result of brooding among our people who have so little in their lives. I'm sorry. What will you do? Go away somewhere else?"

He looked at her quickly — scorn written upon his face.

"Go away," he repeated, "and admit my own guilt? Well, hardly. I'll stay here and see this

thing through if I have to do it in the face of all of them."

"Splendid, Code!" she cried, clapping her hands. "Just what I knew you would say. And, remember, I will help you all I can and whenever you need me."

He looked at her gratefully and she thrilled with triumph. At last there was something more in his glance than the purely impersonal; he had awakened at last, she thought, to what she might mean to him.

There followed one of those pauses that often occur when two people are thinking intensely on different subjects. For perhaps five minutes the cheerful fire crackled on uninterrupted. Then, suddenly recollecting himself, Code sprang to his feet and held out his hand.

"Half-past ten," he said, glancing at the mahogany chime-clock on the mantelpiece. "I must really go. It has been kind of you to have me up to-night and tell me all these —"

"Inner secrets of your own life that you never suspected before?" she laughed.

"Exactly. You have done me a service like the good old friend you always were."

She took his hand, and he noticed that hers was a trifle cold. They started toward the hallway.

From the broad veranda of Mallaby House the view extended a dozen miles to sea. Beneath the hill on which the mansion stood the village of Free-

kirk Head nestled against the green. Now the dim, yellow lights of its many lamps glowed in the darkness and edged the crescent of stony beach where washed the cold waters of Flag's Cove.

To the left at one tip of the crescent the flash of Swallowtail Light glowed and died like the fire in a gigantic cigarette. To the right, at the other, could be seen the faint lamps of Castalia, three miles away.

For a minute they stood drinking in the superb beauty of it all. Then Elsa left him with a conventional word, and Schofield heard the great front door close softly behind her.

Silently he descended the steps, when suddenly from the town below came the hideous, raucous shriek of a steam-whistle.

He stood for a minute, astonished, for the whistle was that of the steamer *Grande Mignon*, that daily plied between the island and the mainland. Now the vessel lay at her dock and Code, as well as all the island, knew that her wild signaling at such an hour foreboded some dire calamity.

Swiftly buttoning his coat, he started on a run down the winding, rocky path that led from Mallaby House. He cast one more glance toward the roofs of the village before he plunged among the pine and tamarack, and in that instant caught a red glow from the general direction of the fish wharfs.

CHAPTER II

THE RED PERIL

FIVE minutes of plunging and slipping brought him down to the main road that gleamed a dim gray in the blackness. A quarter of a mile east lay the wharfs, the general store, and some of the best dwellings in Freekirk Head.

Ahead of him in the road he could see lanterns bobbing, and the illuminated legs of the men who carried them running. Behind he heard the muffled pound of boots in thick dust, and the hoarse panting of others racing toward the scene of the trouble. The frantic screeching of the steamer's whistle (that was not yet silent) had done its work well. Freekirk Head was up in arms.

Instinctively and naturally Code Schofield ran, just as he had run from his father's house since he was ten years old. His long, easy stride carried him quickly over the ground, and he passed two or three of those ahead with lanterns. They shouted at him.

"Hey, what's the trouble?" panted one.
"Know anything about it?"

"No, but it might be the wharfs," he replied, with-

out stopping. He veered out to the edge of the road so as to avoid any more queries. He looked with suspicion now on all these men.

Who of them, he wondered, was not, in his heart, convicting him of those things Elsa Mallaby had mentioned? His straightforward nature revolted against the hypocrisy in men that bade them treat him as they had done all his life, and yet think of him only as a criminal.

Suddenly the dull red that had glowed dimly against the sky burst into rosy bloom. A great tongue of fire leaped up and licked the heavens, while floating down the brisk breeze came the distant mingling of men's shouts. As he passed a white wooden gate he heard a woman on the porch crying, and a child's voice in impatient question.

Then for the first time he lost sight of his own distress and thought of the misery of his whole people. It was August, and the Indians should soon be coming from the mainland to spear porpoises.

The dulce pickers on the back of the island reported a good yield from the rocks at low tide, but outside of these few there was wretchedness from Anthony's Nose to Southern Cross.

The fish had failed.

A hundred years and more had the Grande Mignon fishermen gone out with net and handline and trawl; and for that length of time the millions in the

sea had fed, clothed, and housed the thousand on the island. When prices had been good there were even luxuries, and history tells of men who, in one haul from a weir, have made their twenty-five thousand dollars in an hour.

This was all gone now. The fish had failed.

Day after day since early spring the men had put to sea in their sloops and motor-dories, trawling and hand-lining from twenty miles out in the Atlantic to four and a half fathoms off Dutch Edge. The result was the same. The fish were poor and few. Even at Bulkhead Rip, where the sixty-pounders played among the racing tides, there was scarcely a bite.

A fisherman lives on luck, so for a month there was no remark upon the suddenly changed condition. But after that, as the days passed and not a full dory raced up to Bill Boughton's fish stand, muttered whispers and old tales went up and down the island.

It was recalled that the fish left a certain Norwegian coast once for a period of fifty years, and that the whole occupation of the people of that coast was changed. Was that to be the fate of Grande Mignon? If so, what could they do? Extensive farming on the rocky island was impossible, and not one ship had ever been built there for the trade. Where would things end?

So it had gone until now, in the middle of August, the people of Freekirk Head, Seal Cove, and Great

Harbor, the main villages along the front or Atlantic side of the island, were face to face with the question of actual life or death.

So far the season's catch was barely up to that of a good month in normal times; credit was low, and salting and drying were almost useless, for the people ate most of their own catch. Things were at a standstill.

And now the fire on top of all!

Captain Code Schofield thought of all these things as he ran along the King's Road toward the fire. Now he was almost upon it, and could see that the fish stand and wharf of the two wealthiest men in the village were burning furiously. The roar of the flames came to him.

A hundred yards back from the water stood Bill Boughton's general store, and next it, in a row, dwellings; typical white fishermen's cottages with green blinds and a flower-filled dory in the front yard.

The King's Road divided at Bill Boughton's store, the branch leading down to the wharfs, while the main road went on to Swallowtail Light. Schofield plunged down the branch into the full glare of the fire, where a crowd of men had already gathered.

As good luck would have it there was not a vessel tied up to the stand, the whole fleet being made fast to its moorings in the bay. Code's first duty when he started running had been to make sure that his

Laughing Lass was riding safely at her anchorage.

The burning wharfs faced south. The brisk breeze was southeast and bore a promise of possible rain. The steamer *Grande Mignon*, after giving the first warning, had steamed away from her perilous dockage to a point half a mile nearer the entrance to the bay, and now lay there shrieking until the frowning cliffs and abrupt hills echoed with the hideous noise.

"How'd it happen?" asked Schofield of the first man he met.

"Dunno exactly. Cal'late some tanks in the oil-room caught first. Can't do much with them wharfs, I guess."

"Who's in charge of things here?"

"The squire."

Schofield hurried away in search of Squire Hardy, head man of the village, and local justice of the peace. He found him working like a Trojan, his white whiskers ruffled into a circle about his face.

"Lend us a hand here, Code," yelled the squire, who with three other men was attempting to get a great circular horse-trough under a huge pump with a handle long enough for three men to lay hold of. Schofield fell to with a will and helped move the trough into place. The squire set the three men to the task of filling it and then went to Code.

"Any chance to save those wharfs, d'ye think?"

"No, squire. Better leave them and the fish houses and work on Boughton's store and the cottages. They're right in the path of the wind. It'll be tough on Nailor and Thomas to lose their stand and houses, but you know what will happen if the fire gets into the dwellings."

"I thought so all along — curse me if I didn't!" yelled the judge, and then, turning toward a crowd of men who were looking apprehensively here and there, he shouted:

"All hands with the buckets now, lively!"

Suddenly the basement doors of Boughton's store were thrown open and a huge, black-bearded man with a great voice appeared there.

"Buckets this way!" he bellowed, in a tone that rose clearly above the roar and crackle of the fire. As the men reached him he handed out the implements from great stacks at his feet — rubber buckets, wooden buckets, tin and iron buckets, new, old, rusty and galvanized. It was Pete Ellinwood, the fire marshal of the village and custodian of the apparatus.

Because in the hundred or more years of its existence there has never been water pressure in Grande Mignon, the fighting of a fire there with primitive means has become an exact and beautiful science.

A few bold spirits had disputed the wisdom of Squire Hardy's orders to let the wharf and fish house burn, and had attempted to give them a dousing. In

less than five minutes they had retreated, singed and hairless, due to a sudden explosion of a drum of oil.

"Play on Bill Boughton's store!" came the order.

Already an iron ladder reached to the eaves of the building. Two men galloped up its length, dragging behind them another ladder with a pair of huge hooks at the end.

Clinging like monkeys, they worked this up over their heads and up the shingles until the hooks caught squarely across the ridge-pole of the house. Then, on hands and feet, they trotted up this and sat astride the ridge-pole. One of these was Code Schofield.

Other men now swarmed up the ladders, until there was one on every rung from the ground to the top of the house.

Below, a line of men extended from the foot of the ladder to the great circular horse-trough. Another line extended from the opposite side of the store also to the horse-trough, where three men worked the great pump.

Back twenty yards, along the King's Road, a white-faced row of women and children stood, ready to rush home and move their furniture into the fields.

Code, looking down, made out his mother and returned her friendly wave. Their house was across the road not a hundred feet away.

With a muffled roar another drum on the pier exploded. A great wave of molten fire shot out in the

breeze, and the shingles on Bill Boughton's store, parched with the drought of a month, burst into quick flame.

The squire ran back to the water-trough.

"Dip!" he yelled. Big Pete Ellinwood, with the piles of buckets beside him, seized one and twitched it full.

"Pass!" screamed the squire as it came up dripping. Ellinwood's great arm swung forward to meet the arm of the man a yard away. The bucket changed hands and went forward without losing a drop.

Up it went swiftly from one to another, to the eaves, to the two men at the top.

Now the fire sent branches out from the burning wharf along the low frames where some of the season's miserable catch was drying in the open air after salting. The fish curled and blackened in the fierce heat.

Only two men were not in the bucket brigade. They were Nailor and Thomas, who stood watching the destruction of their whole property. They knew the squire had done well in saving the village rather than their own buildings. It was the tacit understanding in Freekirk Head that a few should lose rather than the many.

Code Schofield, from his perch on the Boughton roof-tree, looked down again to where he had last

seen his mother. Once more he distinguished the tall figure with its white face looking anxiously up at him, and he waved his hand reassuringly. Then his eye was caught by two other figures that lurked in the first shadows farther up the King's Road. A moment later he made sure of their identity.

They were Nellie Tanner and Nat Burns.

For years there had been a dislike between the Burnses and the Schofields. Old Jasper Schofield, Code's father, and Michael Burns had become enemies over the same girl a quarter of a century before, and the breach had never been healed. Old Captain Jasper had won, but he had never forgotten, and Michael had never forgiven.

Quite unconsciously the feud had been passed on to the children of both (for Michael had married within a few years), and from school-days Code and Nat had been the leaders of rival gangs.

When they became young men they matched their season's catches and raced their father's schooners. They were the two natural leaders of the Freekirk Head young bloods, but they were never on the same side of an argument.

Schofield wondered why Nat Burns was not at the fire, as usual attempting to make himself leader of the battle without doing much of the work, and now the reason was apparent. He preferred to pursue his courting under the eyes of the village rather than

to obey the unwritten law of service. And he was with Nellie Tanner!

Unlike most youths, there had never been a time in Code's life when he had passed the favor of his affections around. Since the time they were both five Nellie Tanner had supplied in full all the feminine requirements he had ever desired. And she did at this moment. But Nat Burns had seen a great deal of her in the last three months, he remembered, taking advantage of Code's desperate search for fish.

Once in this train his thoughts bore him on and on. Memories, speculations, and desires crowded his mind, and he forgot that beneath him the roof of Boughton's store was burning more and more briskly.

Suddenly the man beside him on the ridge-pole shook his arm.

"Say, Code!" he cried. "What's that burnin' over there? I didn't know the fire had gone across the street."

Schofield looked up quickly and followed the direction of the other's arm that pointed through the trees to the opposite side of King's Road and a little to westward.

"Good Lord!" he cried excitedly; "it's my own place, and my mother is all alone down there. Quick! Send somebody up here! I'm going!"

CHAPTER III

THE TEST

THE man behind him climbed to the ridge-pole and Code began the descent, necessarily slow and careful because the ladders were loaded with men passing buckets. When he reached the ground he started for home on the run.

Opposite Boughton's general store was another shop that made a specialty of fishermen's "oilers," boots, and overalls. Two houses to the westward of that was the old Schofield place, a low, white house surrounded by a rickety fence and covered with ivy.

Once he reached the middle of the road Code saw that he had been mistaken in the location of the fire, for his mother's place was intact. The flame was coming, however, from the house next but one — Bijonah Tanner's place.

A crowd was gathering in the yard that was overgrown with dusty wire-grass, and the squire was pushing his way through to take charge. Code knew that only two days before Captain Bijonah and his wife had sailed in the *Rosan* to St. John's for lumber,

leaving Nellie alone in charge of the three small Tanners. He wondered where they all were now.

He found his mother on the edge of the crowd that was helping to save the furniture, and learned that Nellie and young Burns had already arrived and were doing what they could.

From the first it was apparent that the place was doomed, for although there were plenty of men eager to form a bucket brigade, the supply of water was limited, and most of the buckets were at the larger fire.

But the squire was working wonders, and enlisted Code to help him.

In fifteen minutes the whole roof and attic were ablaze, and the men turned their attention to wetting down the near walls of the houses on each side. All the valuables and most of the simple furniture had been saved.

At the earliest moment Schofield escaped from the squire and sought out Nellie. He found her, hysterical, surrounded by a group of women, and hovered over by Nat Burns. With each hand she held a child close to her.

"Bige! Where is little Bige?" she was crying as Code came up. "Tom and Mary are here, but I've lost Bige. Oh, Nat! Where is Bige?"

"Bless me if I know," stammered Burns weakly. "Last I saw of him he was under that cherry-tree

where you told him to stay until you got the others. It wa'n't more'n five minutes ago I seen him there. He must be around somewheres. I'll look."

Without another word he hurried off in a frantic search, looking to left and right, behind every bush, and among the crowd, bellowing the boy's name at the top of his voice.

Code walked up to the frantic girl and went straight to the point.

"Hello, Nellie!" he said. "Where do you cal'-late little Bige might be? I hear you've lost him."

"Yes, I have, Code. I stood him under that cherry-tree and told him not to move. When I got back he was gone. He was seven, and just old enough to run around by himself and investigate things. Oh, I'm so afraid he's gone —"

"Listen!" Code's sharp, masterful tone put a sudden end to her sobbing. "Was there anything in the house he valued much?" Suddenly she drew in her breath sharply.

"Yes, yes," she cried, "his mechanical train. He asked me if I had got it and I said I had. He must have gone over to the furniture and found it hadn't been brought down. Oh, Code, Code —"

"What's the matter, Nellie?"

It was Nat Burns's hard voice as he elbowed roughly past Code and bent solicitously over the girl. He had heard her last words and the plead-

ing in them, and his brow was dark with question and anger.

"Did you find him, Nat?" queried Nellie in an agony of suspense.

"No, I don't know where the little beggar can be," he replied; "I've —" The girl screamed and fainted.

"What's the matter here?" shouted Burns.

"What's the matter with her?"

"The boy went back into the house for his toy-engine and hasn't come out again," said Code, facing the other and regarding him with a level eye.

There was a dramatic pause. After Nat's proprietary interest in Nellie and her affairs it was distinctly his place to make the next move. Everybody felt it, and Code, subconsciously realizing this, said nothing.

It required another moment for the situation to become clear to Burns. Then, when he realized what alternatives he faced, he gradually grew pale beneath his deep tan and looked defiantly from one to another of the group about him.

"Rot!" he cried suddenly. "The boy can't have gone back. It wasn't five minutes ago I saw him under the cherry-tree. I haven't looked in this direction. Wait! I'll be back in a minute!" And again he was off in his frantic search, his voice rising above the roar of the fire.

Code waited no longer.

Snatching up a blanket from the ground, he raced toward the burning house.

The lower floor was still almost intact, but the upper floor and the roof were practically consumed. The danger lay not in entering the house, but in remaining in it, for although the roof had fallen in, yet the second floor had not burned through and was in momentary danger of collapse.

The spectators did not know what was in Code Schofield's mind until he had burst into the danger zone. Then, with the blanket wound about his arm and shielding his face he plunged toward the open doorway. It was as though he stood suddenly before the open door of a vast furnace.

The blast of heat seemed an impenetrable force, and he struggled against it with all his strength.

One more look, a mighty effort, and he was in the temporary shelter of the doorway. He drew a long breath and plunged forward.

He knew the plan of the Tanner house as he knew his own, and he remembered that in the rear was a room where the children played. The hall ran straight back to the door of this room; but there was no egress from the rear except through the kitchen, which adjoined the play-room.

The heat that beat down upon his head made him dizzy, and he could not see for the smoke that filled

the hall. Instinctively he went down on his hands and knees, discarding the blanket, and crawled toward the rear.

He had scarcely reached the closed door of the play-room when, with a thunderous roar, the ceilings at the front of the house fell in, cutting off any escape in that quarter. He knew that at any moment the rest of the ceilings would collapse.

Half-strangled with the increasing smoke, he staggered to his feet and lunged against the door, forcing it open. The dim light from the one square-paned window showed a small form huddled on the floor, the mouth open, and a tiny locomotive gripped in one hand.

A rush of smoke and flame followed the violent opening of the door, and Code felt himself growing giddy. A swift glance behind showed a wall of fire where the hall had once been, and for the first time he realized the seriousness of the task he had taken upon himself. But there was no fear. Rather there came a sense of gladness that a fighter feels when the battle has at last come to close grips.

He swept the small form of Bige up into his arms and leaped to the window that was built low in the wall and without weights. To raise it and manipulate the catch was out of the question. With all his strength he swung his foot against the pane squarely in the middle. Panes and frame splintered outward,,

leaving the casement intact except for a few jagged edges of glass.

Then, suddenly, as he dropped the boy to the ground outside, there came a blast of fire on the back draft created by the opening. Singed and strangling, with a last desperate effort he threw himself outward and fell on his shoulders beside little Bige.

Men who had heard the crash of glass when the window went out rushed forward and dragged man and boy to safety.

A quarter of an hour later, his head and neck banded with sweet-oil, Code made his way weakly to where Nellie sat among her belongings cradling in her arms the boy whom the doctor had just brought back to consciousness.

"He's all right, is he?" asked Schofield.

She smiled up at him through her tears.

"Yes, the doctor says it was just too much smoke. Oh, Code, how can I thank you for this? And you are hurt! Is it bad? Can't I do anything?"

She struggled to her feet, solicitude written on her face, for the moment even forgetting little Bige, who had begun to howl.

"No," said Schofield, "you can't do anything. It isn't much. I'm only glad I succeeded. Don't think anything about it."

"Father and mother will never forget this, and

I'm sure will do what they can to make it right with you."

He looked at her as though she had struck him. Never in his life had she used that tone. Before the mute query of his eyes she turned her head away.

"What do you mean — by that?" he faltered, hardly knowing what he said.

"Nothing, Code, only — only —" She could not finish.

"What has happened, Nellie?" he began, and then halted, his gaze riveted upon her hand. A single diamond glittered from the dirt and grime that soiled her finger.

"That?" he gasped, stunned by a feeling of misery and helplessness.

"Nat and I are engaged," she said in a low voice without answering his question. "Just since last night."

There was nothing more to be said. The banal wishes for happiness would not rise to his lips. He looked at her intently for a moment, saw her eyes again drop, and walked away. He was suddenly tired and wanted to go home and rest. The reaction of his nervous and physical strain had set in.

The hundred yards to his own gateway was a triumphal procession, but he scarcely realized it. Somehow he answered the acclamations that were

heaped upon him. He smiled, but he did not know how.

At the gate some one was waiting for him. At first he thought it was his mother, but he suddenly saw that it was Elsa Mallaby. He told himself that she must have come down to the village to watch the fire, and wondered why she was in that particular place.

"Code," she cried, her face flushed with glad pride, "you were splendid! That was the bravest thing I ever heard of in my life. I knew you would do it!"

He smiled mechanically, thanked her, and passed on while she gazed after him, hurt and struck silent by the cold misery in his face.

"I wonder," she said to herself slowly, "whether something besides what I told him has happened to him to-night?"

CHAPTER IV

REFUGEES

IT was almost one o'clock in the morning when Code went into the parlor of his mother's cottage and sank down upon the ancient plush sofa. His eyes ached, and the back of his head and neck, where the fire had singed him, were throbbing painfully.

There was apparently no one at home.

Even little Josie, the orphan that helped his mother, seemed to have been drawn out into the road by the excitement of the night, and the house, except for a single lamp burning on the table, was in darkness.

He thought of going up-stairs to bed, but remembered that his mother was not in, and decided he would rest a little while and then go out and find her. Suddenly it seemed very luxurious and grateful to be able to stretch at full length after so much labor, and within a few minutes this sense of luxury had become a pleasant oblivion.

Voices and a bright light woke him up. Dazed and alarmed, he struggled to a sitting posture, but

a gently firm hand pushed him down again and he heard his mother's voice.

" Lay down again, Code," she said. " You must be pretty well beat out with all you've done to-night. We've just got some friends for the night. Poor boy, let me see your burns! "

Schofield, who had guided schooners for years through the gales and shoals of the Bay of Fundy without a qualm, became red and ashamed at his mother's babying. Rubbing his sleepy eyes, he sat up again determinedly and made an effort to greet the company who, he knew, had come into the room with his mother.

Across the room, near the old melodeon, sat Nellie Tanner, holding little Bige and smiling wanly at him. The other two children leaned against her, asleep on either side.

" Don't get up, Code," she said. " You've earned your rest more than any man in Freekirk Head to-night. I'm afraid, though, we're going to make more trouble for you. Ma Schofield wouldn't let me go anywhere else but here till the *Rosan* gets back from St. John's.

" Oh, I hate to think of their coming! They'll sail around Flag Point and look for the kiddies waving in front of the house. And they won't even see any house; but, thanks to you, Code, they'll see the kiddies."

He knew by the tense, strained tone of her voice that she was very near the breaking-point, and his whole being yearned to comfort her and try to make her happy.

Cursing himself for a lazy dolt, he sprang up and walked over toward her.

"Now, you just let me handle this, Nellie," he said, "and we'll soon have Tommie and Mary and Bige all curled up on that sofa like three kittens."

With a sigh of ineffable relief she resigned the dead weight in her weary arms to him, and he, stepping softly, and holding him gently as a woman, soon had the boy more comfortable than he had been for hours. Mary and Tommie followed, and then Nellie, free of her responsibility at last, bent forward, put her elbows on her knees, and wept.

Code, racked and embarrassed, looked around for his mother, but that mainstay was nowhere in sight. He thought of whistling, so as to appear unconscious of her tears, but concluded that would be merely rude. To take up a paper or book and read it in the face of a woman's weeping appeared hideous, although for the first time in many months, he felt irresistibly drawn to the ancient and dusty volumes in the glass-doored bookcase.

He compromised by turning his back on the affecting sight, thrusting his hands in his pockets, and

studying the remarkably straight line formed by the abrupt junction of the wall and the ceiling.

"Do you mind if I cry, C — Code?" sobbed the girl, apparently realizing their position for the first time.

"No! Go right ahead!" he cried as heartily as though some one had asked for a match. He was intensely happy that the matter was settled between them. Now the harder she cried the more he liked it, for they understood one another. So she cried and he walked softly about, his hands in his pockets and his lips puckered for the whistle that he did not dare permit himself.

Ma Schofield interrupted this near-domestic scene by her arrival, carrying a tray, on which were several glasses covered with a film of frost and out of which appeared little green forests. Code ceased to think about whistling.

"Oh, Ma Schofield, what have you done?" cried Nellie, her tears for the moment forgetting to flow as her widening eyes took in the delights of the frosted glasses and piles of cake behind them.

"Done?" queried ma. "I haven't done anything but what my conscience tells me ought to be done. If yours cal'lates to disturb you some you can go right on up to your room, lamb, for you must be dead with lugging them children around."

Nellie's tears disappeared not to return. She shook her head.

"No, ma," she said; "my conscience is just like them children — sleeping so hard it would take Gabriel's trumpet to wake 'em up. It's more tired than I am."

"All right," said ma, with finality; "we will now proceed to refresh ourselves."

It was two o'clock before they separated for the remainder of the night.

Code's room, with its big mahogany double bed, was given over to Nellie and the children while he gladly resigned himself to the humpy plush sofa.

By this time they had received news from half a dozen neighbors that Bill Boughton's general store had been only half destroyed and that the contents had all been saved. The wharfs and fish-houses were at last burning and property on the leeward side of the flames was declared to be safe.

A general exodus began along the King's Road.

Men who had galloped up from Great Harbor, with an ax in one hand and a bucket in the other, mounted their horses and rode away. Others from Hayward's Cove and Castalia, who had driven in buggies and buckboards, collected their families and departed. The King's Road was the scene of a long procession, as though the people of Freekirk Head were evacuating the town.

A detachment of men under Squire Hardy's orders remained about the danger-zone ready to check any further advance of the flames or to rouse the town to further resistance should this become necessary. But for the most part the people of the village returned to their homes.

Wide-awake and nervous, Schofield lay open-eyed upon the couch while unbidden thoughts raced through his brain.

The very fact of his sleeping on the plush couch was enough to bring to his mind the memory of one whom he had irretrievably lost on this memorable night. Was she not at this moment under his own roof, miserable and nearly destitute? He knew that, as long as he might live, his humble room up-stairs would never be the same again.

It had been made a place sweet and full of wonder by the very fact that she was in it. Never again, he knew, could he enter it without its being faintly fragrant of her who, all his life, he had considered the divinest created thing on earth. By her presence she had sanctified it and made of it a shrine for his meditative and wakeful hours.

Ever since they had gone to school together, hand in hand, the names of Nellie Tanner and Code Schofield had been linked in the mouths of Grande Mignon busybodies. Living all their lives two doors away, they had grown up in that careless intimacy of

constant association that is unconscious of its own power until such intimacy is removed.

To-night the shock had come.

It was not that Code had taken for granted that Nellie would marry him. Never in his life had he told her that he loved her. It is not the habit of men who rove the seas to keep those they love constantly supplied with literature or confectionery, or to waste too many words in the language of devotion.

He admitted frankly to himself that he had always hoped to marry her when he had acquired the quarter interest in Bill Boughton's fish-stand that had been promised him, but he had not told her so, nor did he know that she would accept him. The idea had been one to be thought of only at times of quietness and confidence in his future such as come to every man.

But he had not reckoned on Nat Burns. He had not realized quite to what an extent Burns had made progress. He recalled, now that it was brought forcibly home to him, that Nat had been constantly at the Tanners' for the last four or five months. But Code had thought nothing of this, for Nat had paid similar court at times to others of the girls of Freekirk Head. He was, in fact, considered the village beau.

And Nellie herself had told him nothing. There had been a modest shyness about her in their rela-

tions that had kept him at an exasperating and piquant distance.

Well, everything was over now, he told himself. He could take his defeat since Nellie did not care for him.

Then he suddenly recalled Burns's actions and manner of speaking during the harrowing moments of the fire.

"I wonder if Nat really loves her?" he asked himself. "And if not, why did he become engaged?"

CHAPTER V

STARTLING NEWS

THE home-coming of Captain Bijonah Tanner and his wife did not provide the thrill looked for by the more morbid inhabitants of Freekirk Head. In the excitement of the fire all hands had forgotten that cable communication between Mignon and the mainland was unbroken.

The operator, in the pursuance of his duty, had sent word of the fire to Eastport, and then concocted some cable despatches for Boston and Portland papers that left nothing to be desired from the viewpoint of sensationalism. In his zeal for filling space and eking out his slender income, the operator left nothing standing on Grande Mignon except the eternal rocks and the lighthouse.

It was such an account that Bijonah Tanner fed upon that morning in the tiny cabin of the *Rosan*, and half an hour after he had read it he was under way. Special mention had been made of Code Schofield's rescue of little Bige, with a sentence added that the Tanner place had been wiped out.

With their minds filled with desperate scenes of

cataclysm and ruin, the Tanners raced the complaining *Rosan* around Flag Point six hours later, only to fall upon one another and dance for joy at the sight of the village nestling as of yore against the green mountains and gleaming white in the descending sun.

An acrid smell and a smudge of smoke told of what had really been, and a black heap of ruins where the familiar house had stood for so long confirmed their fears for their own property; but to see the village content and smiling, except for a poor building or two, was joy enough to overbalance the personal loss.

So those who expected a tearful and emotional home-coming were disappointed.

Code met the dory that rowed ashore after Bijonah had made fast to his mooring in the little cove that was the roadstead for the fishing fleet. He had half expected to share the duty with Nat Burns since the recent change in his relations to the Tanners, but Burns did not put in an appearance, although it was three o'clock in the afternoon.

Bijonah shook hands with him, and Ma Tanner kissed him, the latter ceremony being a baptism of happy tears that all were safe and alive. Bijonah cleared his voice and pulled hard at his beard.

"Understand you're quite a hero, Code," he ventured bluffly, careful to conceal any emotion, but resolved to give the occasion its due.

"Oh, rot, captain!" said Code equally bluffly, and the ceremony was over.

But not so with Ma Tanner. She wept and laughed over the preserver of her offspring, and called him so many exalting names that he was glad to turn her over to Nellie and his mother at the Schofield gate.

Hot and flushed with the notoriety she had given him along the main road, he retired to the corner shop and drank wonderful cold ginger-beer out of a white stone jug until his temperature had returned to normal.

But later he returned to the house, and found the Tanners about to depart. The widow Sprague, near the Odd Fellows' Hall, who lived, as she expressed it, "all deserted and alone," had agreed to take the family into her rambling cottage. Luke Fraser had brought his truck-cart up alongside the rescued Tanner belongings, and they were already half loaded.

"Can you come down to the widdy's to-night, Code?" asked Bijonah. "I've got somethin' to tell ye that ought to int'rest ye consid'able."

"Yes, I'll be there about eight," was the reply as Schofield joined in loading the truck.

He found the captain that night smoking a pipe on the low front porch of the Widow Sprague's cottage, evidently very much at home. Bijonah motioned him to a chair and proffered a cigar with a

slightly self-conscious air. Inside the house, Code could hear the sound of people moving about and the voice of a woman singing low, as though to a child. He told himself without question that this was Nellie getting the kiddies to sleep.

"A feller hears queer things over in St. John's sometimes," announced Bijonah suddenly, sucking at his pipe.

"Yes."

"An' this time I heard somethin' about you."

"Me? I don't know three people in St. John's."

"Guess I met one of the three, then."

"Where? How? Who was it?"

Bijonah Tanner coughed and shifted uneasily in his chair.

"Wal," he said, "I was takin' a little turn along the water-front, just a *leetle* turn, as the wife will tell you, when I dropped into a — er — that is — a rum-shop and heard three men at the table next to mine talking about you."

Schofield smiled broadly in the darkness. Bijonah's little turns along the water-front of St. John's or any other port had been the subject for much prayer and supplication in the hearts of many devout persons thoroughly interested in their neighbor's welfare. And of late years Ma Tanner had been making trips with him to supply stimulus to his conscience.

"What were they talking about?" So far from being suspicious, Code was merely idly curious of the gossip about him.

"My boy," said Tanner, suddenly grave, "I was the best friend your father had for forty years, and I'm goin' to try and be as good a friend to his son. But you mustn't mind what I tell ye."

"I won't, captain. Go ahead," said Code, his interest awakening.

"Wal, them men was talkin' about the loss of the old *May Schofield*, and one of 'em in particular allowed as how he didn't think it should have foundered when it did. What d'ye think of that?"

Schofield had stiffened in his chair as though undergoing a spasm of pain. The sentences smote him between the eyes of his sensibilities. Had it come to this, that his name was being bandied dishonorably about the barrooms of St. John's? If so, how and why?

"Then I suppose you've heard the talk in Grande Mignon before this?"

"Yes, Code, I have; and I've called every man a liar that said anything definite against you. I'm gettin' old, but there ain't very many men here able enough to shove that name back down my throat, an' I notice none of 'em tried. It's all idle talk, that's all; an' there ain't a soul that can prove a single thing against you, even cowardice. An'

that's more'n can be said o' some men in this village."

Code was grateful, and he said so. It was something to find a friend so stanch and loyal that suspicion had never even found soil in his mind where it might take root. Two such he had now: Elsa Mallaby and Bijonah Tanner.

"What else did those men say?" he asked in conclusion.

"If I remember right, an' I was perfectly clear at the time, this is what one said: 'Fellers,' sez 'e to the other two, 'e sez — 'fellers, that young Captain Schofield in Freekirk Head is goin' on the rocks, or I don't hear what's goin' on in my office.'

"'Then they're goin' to sue him to recover part of his insurance on the old schooner *May Schofield*?' asks the second.

"'If I didn't hear the chief say that this mornin' you can shoot me on sight!' the first answers. An' then for a while I couldn't hear any more, an' you can bet I was watchin' the door somethin' awful for fear ma would come in an' spoil it all by draggin' me off."

"But who were these men?" asked Code. "Whom did they mean by the chief?"

"I was just gettin' to that. After a while, from a little bit here an' a little there, I made out that the first young feller was private secretary to the presi-

dent of the Marine Insurance Company. That's the firm that carried the old *May*, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"I thought so. They've got my *Rosan*, too, though I wish mightily now that they hadn't. This feller is the private secretary to the president, an' the other two are clerks or something in the office. [They may have been up to something crooked, and then again they may have just been talkin' things over as young fellers often do when they're interested in their work. Anyway, there's enough in what they said to set you thinkin', I cal'late."

"Yes," said Code slowly and grimly, "it is. I've only known that the island was talking since last night, and now I find St. John's is, too. It's spreading pretty fast, it seems; and I wonder where it will end?" He pondered silently for a while.

"If they sue to recover, what'll you do?" ventured Tanner hesitatingly.

"God knows!" answered Schofield and laughed bitterly. "I haven't got a thing on earth but the *Charming Lass*, an' this year I haven't caught enough fish to pay for my new mains'l. My credit is still good at Bill Boughton's, but that's all."

"But the cottage —"

"That is my mother's, and they could never get that. If they sue and I lose they must take the *Lass*, and after they've subtracted the judgment

from the sale price I suppose I'll get the rest — maybe enough to buy a second-hand sloop."

"Yes, but that isn't the worst part of it, Code. As soon as they bring suit they will attach the schooner, so that even if the trial doesn't come up for weeks you still can't use her, and will have to sit around idle or go hand-lining in your dory. And you know what that means with winter comin' on."

"I know." He had seen hard winters that had tried the resources of the village to the utmost, but he had never faced one that promised to be like the next.

"Well, what would you advise me to do, captain?"

"Get out!" snapped Tanner. "Get a crew and take the *Lass* to sea. There's one thing sure, a lawyer can't serve you with a summons or anything else if he has to look for you on the Atlantic Ocean."

Schofield smiled. The remedy called for was heroic, truly; but was it honorable?

"I wonder if they can do that, anyway?" he asked. "After the *May* was lost the insurance people settled without a complaint. Can they rake up that matter again now?"

"By Jove! That reminds me. Them fellers discussed that very thing; an' the secretary said that if the law had been broke at the time of the sinkin' — I mean, if the schooner wasn't fit or had been

tampered with — that it was within the law. But, o' course, somebody's got to make the complaint."

"That's just it," cried Code, springing up and throwing away the stump of his cigar; "somebody has got to make the complaint! Well, now, from what I can see, somebody's made it. All this talk could not have gone on in the island unless it started from somewhere. And the question is, where?"

They were interrupted by the sound of footsteps. In the darkness the figure of a man appeared approaching the house. A moment later the newcomer stepped on the low veranda, and both men recognized him.

It was Nat Burns.

"Is Nellie here?" he asked without the formality of the usual greetings.

"I cal'late she is, Nat," replied Tanner, rising to his feet. "Wait a minute an' I'll call her."

But he had not reached the door before the girl herself stepped out on the porch. She ran out eagerly, but stopped short when she saw Code in the darkness. Their meeting was obviously reserved.

In the interim Tanner walked to where Schofield stood, silent.

"I cal'late I can give you a pretty good idea where all this trouble started from," he growled in a low tone; but before he could go on Nellie interrupted him.

"Father," she said, coming forward with Nat, "I want to tell you something that we've all been too busy to discuss before this. Nat and I are engaged. He gave me the ring night before last when you were in St. John's. I hope you are pleased, father."

Bijonah Tanner remained silent for a moment, plainly embarrassed by the duty before him. Between most men who follow the sea and their daughters there is much less intimacy than with those who are in other walks of life. Long absences and the feeling that a mother is responsible for her girls are reasons for this; while in the case of boys, who begin to putter round the parental schooner from their earliest youth, a much closer feeling exists. Tanner could not bridge the chasm between himself and his daughter.

"Did you tell your mother?" he asked finally.

"Yes."

"And was she satisfied?"

"Yes, indeed; she was very happy about it, and told me to come right down and tell you."

"Wal, if it suits her it suits me," was the dry conclusion. "I hope you'll be happy. You've got a fine gal there, Nat."

"I know I have, captain," said Burns warmly; "and I'll try to make her happy."

"All right," grunted Bijonah, and sank back into

his chair. Between praising one man who saved his youngest boy, and congratulating another who was to marry his eldest girl, Captain Tanner's day had been over full of ceremonial.

Face to face with the inevitable, Code Schofield offered sincere but embarrassed congratulations; and he was secretly glad that, when opportunity offered for him to shake Nat Burns's hand, that young gentleman was busy lighting a cigarette.

The lovers went inside, and Code stood dejectedly, leaning against the railing. Tanner removed his pipe and spat over the railing.

"It's too blamed bad!" he muttered.

"What?" asked Code, almost unconsciously.

"It's too bad, I say. I used to think that mebbe Nellie would like you, Code. I've counted on it consid'able all my life. But it's too late now. Young Burns'll have to be one of the family from now on."

"Thanks, captain," said Schofield with forced cheerfulness. "I had hoped so, too. But that's all past now. By the way, who was it you thought started all this trouble? I'd like to know that."

"One of the family," muttered Tanner, his thoughts still busy. Then, recollecting Schofield's question, he appeared about to speak, hesitated, and at last said:

"Bless my soul and body if I know! No, I

wouldn't want to say what I thought, Code. I never was one to run down any man behind his back! "

Code looked in amazement at the old man, but not for long. A moment's thought concerning Tanner's recently acquired relation made his suspicion doubly sure that Nat Burns's name had been on Bijonah's tongue.

He immediately dropped the subject and after a little while took his departure.

CHAPTER VI

THE ISLAND DECIDES

IN Freekirk Head, next morning, painted signs nailed to telegraph-poles at intervals along the King's Road as far as Castalia read:

MASS-MEETING TO-NIGHT	
ODD FELLOWS HALL	
8 O'CLOCK	ALL COME

Who had issued this pronunciamiento, what it signified, and what was the reason for a town meeting nobody knew; and as the men trudged down to their dories drawn up on the stony beach near the burned wharfs, discussion was intense.

Finally the fact became known that a half-dozen of the wealthiest and best-educated men in the village, including Squire Hardy and the Rev. Adelbert Bysshe, rector of the Church of England chapel, had held a secret conclave the night before at the squire's house.

It was believed that the signs were the result, and intimated in certain obscure quarters that Pete Ellin-

wood, who had always claimed literary aspirations, had printed them.

Odd Fellows' Hall was the biggest and most pretentious building in Freekirk Head. It was of two stories height, and on its gray-painted front bore the three great gilt links of the society. To one side of it stood a wreck of a former factory, and behind it was the tiny village "lockup."

It marked the spot where the highway turned south at right angles on its wild journey southwest, a journey that ended in a leap into space from the three-hundred foot cliffs of gull-haunted, perpendicular Southern Head.

The interior of the hall was in its gala attire. Two rows of huge oil-lamps extended down the middle from back to front; others were in brackets down the side walls, and three more above the low rostrum at the far end. The chairs were in place, the windows open, and the two young fishermen who acted as janitors of the hall stood at the rear, greeting those that arrived with familiar jocularity.

Into the hall, meant to accommodate two hundred, three hundred people were packed. The men in their rusty black, the women in their simple white or flowered dresses, the children brushed and pig-tailed, had all brought their Sunday manners and serious, attentive faces.

On the low platform presently appeared the Rev. Adelbert Bysshe and Squire Hardy. The rector was a young man with a thin, ascetic face. His mouth was pursed into a small line, and he wore large, round spectacles to aid his faded blue eyes. His clerical garb could not conceal the hesitating awkwardness of his manner, and the embarrassment his hands and feet caused him seemed to be his special cross in life.

When the audience had become quiet he rose and took his stand before them, lowering his head and peering over his glasses.

"Friends," he said, "we have gathered here tonight to discuss the welfare of Grande Mignon Island and the village of Freekirk Head."

A look of startled uncertainty swept over the simple, weather-beaten faces in front of him.

"You know that I am not exaggerating," he continued, "when I say that we are face to face with the gravest problem that has ever confronted us. It has pleased God in His infinite Providence so to direct the finny tribes that the denizens of the deep have altered the location of their usual fishing-grounds.

"Day after day you men have gone forth with nets and lines like the fishers of old; day after day, also like some of the fishers of old, you have re-

turned empty-handed. The salting-bins are not filled, the drying-frames are bare, the shipments to St. John's have practically ceased.

"I do not need to tell you that this spells destitution. This island depends on its fish, and, since cod and hake and pollock have left us, we must cast about for other means of support.

"This meeting, then, after due deliberation last night and earnest supplication of the Almighty for guidance, has been called to determine what course we shall pursue."

Mr. Bysshe, warm now and perspiring freely, retired to his seat and mopped his face. Across the audience, which had listened intently, there swept a murmur of low speech.

It is not given to most fisherfolk to know any more than the bare comforts of life. Theirs is an existence of ceaseless toiling, ceaseless danger, and very poor reward. Hardship is their daily lot, and it requires a great incentive to bring them to a full stop in consideration of their future.

Here, then, in Freekirk Head were three hundred fishermen with their backs against the wall — mutely brave because it is bred in the bone — quietly preparing for a final stand against their hereditary enemies, hunger and poverty.

The low murmur of awestruck conversation suddenly stopped, for Squire Hardy, with his fringe of

white whiskers violently mussed, had risen to speak.

"Mr. Bysshe has just about got the lobster in the pot," he declared, "but I want to say one thing more. Things were bad enough up to a week ago, but since the fire they have been a great deal worse. Mr. Nailor and Mr. Thomas, who owned the fish stand that burned, have been cleaned out. They gave employment to about twenty of you men.

"Those men are now without any work at all because the owners of the other fish stands have all the trawlers and dorymen they need. Even if they didn't have, there are hardly enough fish to feed all hands on the island.

"More than that — and now I hope you won't mind what I am going to say, for we've all been in the same boat one time or another — Mr. Boughton can't be our last hope much longer. You and I and all of us have got long-standing credit at his store for supplies we paid for later from our fishing. The fire of the other night cost Mr. Boughton a lot, and, as most of his money is represented in outstanding credit, he cannot advance any more goods.

"Mr. Boughton is not here himself, for he told me he would never say that word to people he has always trusted and lived with all his life. But I am saying it for him because I think I ought to, and you can see for yourselves how fair it is.

"Now, that's about all I've got to add to what

Mr. Bysshe has said to you. Yes, there's one thing more. Great Harbor and Seal Cove below us here are as bad if not worse off than we are. We cannot look for help in that direction, and I will be a lot thinner man than I am now before I ever appeal to the government.

"We're not paupers, and we don't want city newspapers starting subscription-lists for us. So, as Mr. Bysshe has said, the only thing for us to do is to get our eyes out of the heavens and see what we can do for ourselves."

The squire sat down, pulling at his whiskers and looking apprehensively at the rector, of whose polished periods he stood in some awe.

The audience was silent now. The squire had brought home to these men and women some bald, hard facts that they had scarcely as yet admitted even to themselves. There was scarcely one among them whose account with Bill Boughton was fully satisfied, and now that this mainstay was gone the situation took on an entirely different aspect.

For some minutes no one spoke. Then an old man, bearded to the waist, got upon his feet.

"I've seen some pretty hard times on this island," he said, "but none like this here. I've thought it over some, and I'd like to make a suggestion. My son Will is over on the back of the island pickin' dulce. The market fer that is good — he's even

got ten cents a pound this summer. This is the month of August and winter is consid'able ways off. How about all hands turnin' to an' pickin' dulce? "

This idea was received in courteous silence. There were men there who had spent their summers reaping the harvest of salty, brown kelp from the rocks at low tide, and they knew how impractical the scheme was. Although the island exported yearly fifteen thousand dollars' worth of the strange stuff, it was plain that should all the men devote themselves to it the return would by no means measure up to the labor.

One after another, then, the fishermen got to their feet and discussed this project. In this cause of common existence embarrassment was forgotten and tongues were loosed that had never before addressed a public gathering.

A proposition was put forward that the islanders should dispute the porpoise-spearing monopoly of the Quoddy Indians that were already sailing across the channel for their annual summer's sport, but this likewise met with defeat.

A general exodus of men to the sardine canning-factories in Lubec and Eastport was suggested, and met with some favor until it was pointed out that the small sardine herring had fallen off vastly in numbers, and that the factories were hard put to it to find enough work for their regular employees.

Self-consciousness and restraint were forgotten in this struggle for the common preservation, and above the buzz of general intense discussion there rose always the voice of some speaker with an idea or suggestion.

Code Schofield had come to the meeting with Pete Ellinwood and Jimmie Thomas, both dory mates at different times. They sat fairly well forward, and Code, glancing around during the proceedings, had caught a friendly greeting from Elsa Mallaby, who, with some of her old girlhood friends, sat farther back.

The solemn occasion for and spirit of the meeting had made a deep impression on him; but, as the time passed and those supposedly older and wiser delivered themselves merely of useless schemes, a plan that had come into his mind early in the evening began to take definite shape. As he sat there he pondered the matter over until it seemed to him the only really feasible idea.

Finally, after almost two hours of discussion with no conclusion reached, a pause occurred, and Code, to the amazement of his companions, got upon his feet. As he did so he flushed, for he wondered how many of those eyes suddenly fixed upon him were eyes of hostility or doubt. The thought stung him to a greater determination.

"I don't want to be considered bold after so

many older men have spoken," he said, looking at the squire, "but I have a suggestion to make."

"Go ahead, make it," bellowed the squire cordially. "I wish more young men would give us their ideas."

"Thinking it over, I have come to this conclusion," proceeded Schofield. "There is only one thing the men on this island do perfectly, and that is fish. Therefore, it seems only common sense to me that they ought to go on fishing."

A ripple of laughter ran around the room that was now hot and stuffy from the glare and smell of the great oil-lamps. Code heard the laugh, and his brows drew down into a scowl.

"Of course, they cannot go on fishing here. But there are any number of places north and east of us where they can go on. I mean the Grand Banks and the Cape Shore in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. We have schooners and sloops, we have dories, and men, and can get provisions on credit, I should think, for such a cruise.

"That, then, is my idea — that the captains of Grande Mignon fit out their vessels, hire their crews on shares, and go out on the Banks for fish like the Gloucester men and Frenchmen. If we do it we're going against the best in the world, but I don't believe there is a fisherman here who doesn't believe we can hold our own."

Suddenly far back in the room a woman arose.

She was young, and her face showed that once it might have been beautiful. Her frame was large and angular, and her rusty black clothes sat awkwardly upon it. But youth and beauty and girlish charm had gone from her long since, as it does with those whose men battle with the sea. She was a widow, and a little girl clung sleepily to her dress.

"Code Schofield," she cried, "what about the women? Ye ain't goin' off to leave us fight the winter all alone, are ye? Ye ain't goin' to sail them winter gales on the shoals, are ye? How many of ye do you s'pose will come back?" She shook off those near her who tried to pull her down into her seat.

"Last year they lost a hundred an' five out o' Gloucester, an' every year they make widders by the dozen. If it was set in India's coral strand ye'd know it was a fishin' town by its widders; an' Free-kirk Head'll be just like it. I lost my man in a gale —" Her voice broke and she paused. "D'ye want us all to be widders?"

"How can ye go an' leave us? It's the women the sea kills with misery, not the men. What can we do when you're gone? There ain't any money nor much food. If there come a fire we'd all be cleaned out, for what could we do? If you'll only think of us a little — us women — mebbe you won't

go." She sank down amid a profound silence.

"Poor thing!" rumbled Pete Ellinwood. "She shouldn't have come. Al Green was her man." Sobbing sounded in another quarter of the hall, and the men looked at one another, disconcerted. Still no one spoke. The matter hung in the balance, for all saw instantly that could the women be provided for this was the solution of the problem.

Though taken aback, Code stood to his guns and remained on his feet.

Suddenly in the middle of the hall another woman rose. Her motion was accompanied by the rustle of silk, and instantly there was silence, for Elsa Mallaby commanded considerable respect.

Code saw her with surprise as he turned. She noted his puzzled expression and flashed him a dazzling smile that was not lost, even in that thrilled and excited crowd. He answered it.

"I consider that Captain Schofield has solved the problem," she said in a clear, level tone. "There is no question but that the men of Grande Mignon should fit out their ships and fish on the Banks. There is also no question but that the objection Mrs. Green raised makes such a thing impossible. Now, I want to tell you something.

"I belong in Freekirk Head, and you have all known me since I was little. Hard-luck Jim Mallaby belonged in Freekirk Head and made his money,

out of the island. Jim's money is mine now, and you can rest assured that while the men are away fishing no woman or child on Grande Mignon shall go hungry while I am alive to hear of it.

"Some people hate me because I live in a big house and have everything. It is only natural and I expect it, but ever since Jim left me I have wondered how I could do the most good with his money here. I would like to *give* it; but if you won't have that, you can borrow it on a long-time loan without interest or security. Now I will go out and you can talk it over freely."

With a companion she walked up the aisle and to the door, but before she reached it Code Schofield was standing on a chair, his hat in his hand.

"Three cheers for Mrs. Mallaby!" he yelled, and the very building shook with the tumultuous response.

It was five minutes before the squire, purple with shouting for order, could be heard above the noise. Then, with hand upraised, he shouted:

"All in favor of Schofield's plan say ay!"

And the "ay" was the greatest vocal demonstration ever given in Freekirk Head.

CHAPTER VII

A STRANGER

THE ensuing week was one such as the village had never beheld. A visitor to the island might have thought that war had been declared and that a privateering expedition was being fitted out.

On the railroad near Flag Point there was always some vessel being scraped or painted. Supplies brought over from St. John's by the steamer *Grande Mignon* were stowed in lazarets and below. Rigging was overhauled, canvas patched or renewed, and bright, tawny ropes substituted for the old ones in sheet and tackle.

Every low tide was a signal for great activity among the vessels made fast alongside the wharfs, for the rise of the water was nearly twenty feet, and when it receded the ships stood upright on their keels and exposed their bottoms to scraper, calking mallet, and paint-brush.

In every house where father or son was expecting soon to sail the women were busy with clothing and general outfit. There was a run on the store

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carrying oilskins, sea-boots, oil-lamps, stoves, and general paraphernalia.

All these things were gotten on credit, for there is no such thing as a vessel returning empty-handed from the Banks, and Bill Boughton stood sponsor for most of them.

The owners of vessels divided their time between provisioning and overhauling their ships and the securing of crews. One rainy afternoon, when work had been generally suspended, a number of the men gathered inside Bill Boughton's store to wait for a let-up in the downpour, and the subject of crews was broached.

"How you comin' with your crew, Bige?" asked a tall, lanky man of Captain Tanner.

"First rate. Got a dozen men now an' that's about all the *Rosan* can take care of. At that somebody'll have to sleep on a locker, I cal'late."

"You're doin' well, Bige. I hear Jed Martin can't round up more'n eight, an' he's been as fur south as Great Harbor."

"D'ye wonder?" put in a third. "Jed ain't never set up grub that a shark would eat. I sailed with him once five year ago, an' that was enough fer me."

"Twelve men ain't much," put in Tanner. "Them Gloucester men sail with sixteen or eighteen right along, and I've heard o' one feller put out of

T-Wharf, Boston, carryin' twenty-eight dories. Of course, them fellers lays to fill up quick and make short trips fer the fresh market. Ain't many of them briners."

"Don't believe there's anybody'll carry sixteen men out of here, is they?" came a voice from over in the corner.

"Sure!" The rumble and bellow of the reply denoted Pete Ellinwood where he sat on a cracker-box, his six and a half feet of length sprawled half-way from one counter to the other. "There's Nat Burns's *Hettie B.* She'll carry sixteen, and so will Code Schofield's *Laughing Lass* — mebbe more."

"Huh! Yes, if he can git 'em," sneered a voice.

"Git 'em! O' course he'll git 'em. Why not?" demanded Ellinwood, turning upon the other beligerently.

"Wal," replied the other, "they do say there's men in this village, and farther south, too, that wouldn't sail with Code, not fer a thousand dollars and all f'und."

"Them that says it are fools," declared Ellinwood.

"An' liars!" cut in Bijonah Tanner hotly. "Why won't they sail with the lad? He can handle a schooner as well as you, Burt, and better."

"Yas," said the other contemptuously; "nobody's ever forgot the way he handled the old *May*,

Schofield. Better not play with fire, Bige, or you'll get your hands burned."

Pete Ellinwood got upon his feet deliberately. He was the biggest and most powerful man in the village, despite his forty-five years, and his "ableness" in a discussion — physical or otherwise — was universally respected.

"Look here you, Burt, an' all the rest of you fellers. I've got something to say. Fer consid'able time now I've heard dirty talk about Code and the *May Schofield* — dirty talk an' nothin' more. Now, if any of you can prove that Code did anything but try and save the old schooner, let's hear you do it. If not, shut up! I don't want to hear no more of that talk."

There was silence for a while as all hands sought to escape the gray, accusing eye that wandered slowly around the circle. Then from back in the shadow somewhere a voice said sneeringly:

"What ax you got to grind, Pete?"

A laugh went round, for it was common talk that, since the death of Jasper Schofield, Pete had expressed his admiration for Ma Schofield in more than one way.

"I got this ax to grind, Andrew," replied Ellinwood calmly, "that I'm signed on as mate in the *Charming Lass*, an' I believe the boy is as straight and as good a sailor as anybody on the island."

This was news to the crowd, and the men digested it a minute in silence.

"How many men ye got sailin' with ye?" asked one who had not spoken before.

"Five outside the skipper an' me," was the reply, "an' I cal'late we'll fill her up in a day or so. Seven men can sail her like a witch, but they won't fill her hold very quick. She'll take fifteen hundred quintal easy, or I judge her wrong."

A prolonged whistle from outside interrupted the discussion, and one man going to the door announced that it had stopped raining. All hands got up and prepared to go back to work. Only Bijonah Tanner remained to buy some groceries from Boughton.

"Steamer's early to-day," said the storekeeper, glancing at his watch. "She's bringin' me a lot of salt from St. John's, and I guess I can get it into the shed to-night."

Having satisfied Tanner, he went out of the store the back way and left the captain alone filling his pipe. A short blast of the whistle told him that the steamer was tied up, and idly he lingered to see who had come to the island.

The passengers, to reach the King's Road, were obliged to go past the corner of the general store, and Bijonah stood on the low, wooden veranda, watching them.

Some two dozen had gone when his eye was at-

tracted by a pale, thin youth in a light-gray suit and Panama hat. He thought nothing of him at first except to remark his clothes, but as he came within short vision Tanner gave a grunt of astonishment and bit through the reed stem of his corn-cob pipe.

He recognized the youth as the one he had seen in St. John's and had referred to as the secretary to the president of the Marine Insurance Company.

Instantly the old man's mind flashed back to what he had heard only a week before, which he had told Code. He stood looking after the stranger as though spell-bound, his slow mind groping vainly for some explanation of his presence in Freekirk Head.

He felt instinctively that it must be in connection with the case of Code Schofield and the *May*, and his feeling was corroborated a moment later when, from behind the trunk of a big pine-tree, Nat Burns stepped forward and greeted the other. They had apparently met before, for they shook hands cordially and continued westward along the King's Road.

A few steps brought them opposite the gate to the Schofield cottage, and Bijonah, following their motions like a hawk, saw Nat jerk his thumb in the direction of the house as they walked past.

That was enough for Tanner. He was con-

vinced now that the insurance man had come to carry out the threat made in St. John's, and that Nat Burns was more intimately connected with the scheme than he had at first supposed.

Bijonah set down his package of groceries on the counter inside and turned away toward the wharf where the *Charming Lass* was tied up for a final trimming. She already had her salt aboard and most of her provisions and was being given her final touches by Pete Ellinwood, Jimmie Thomas, and the other members of the crew that had signed on to sail in her.

Tanner hailed Ellinwood from the wharf and beckoned so frantically that the big man swarmed up the rigging to the dock as though he were going aloft to reef a topsail in a half a gale.

"Code's in a pile of trouble," said the old man, and went on briefly to narrate the whole circumstance of the insurance company's possible move. "That feller came on the steamer this afternoon, an' if he serves Code with the summons or attachment or whatever it is, it's my idea that the *Lass* will never round the Swallowtail for the Banks. Where is the boy?"

"Went up to Castalia to see a couple of men who he thought he might get for the crew, but I don't think Burns or any one else knows it. He wanted to make the trip on the quiet an' get them without

anybody's knowing it if he could. But what do you cal'late to do, Bige?"

"By the Great Snood, I don't know!" declared Tanner helplessly.

"Wal," said Pete reassuringly, "you just let me handle this little trouble myself. We'll have the skipper safe an' clear if we have to commit murder to do it. Now, Bige, you just keep your mouth shut and don't worry no more. I'll do the rest."

Feeling the responsibility to be in capable hands and secretly glad to escape events that might be too much for his years, Captain Tanner walked back to the road, secured his package of groceries at the store, and made his way home to the widow Sprague's house.

For five minutes Pete Ellinwood lounged indolently against a spile, engrossed in thought. Then he put on his coat and crossed the King's Road to the Schofield cottage.

He had hardly opened the gate when a strange youth in a gray suit and Panama hat came out of the front door and down the path. Pete recognized the newcomer from St. John's, and the newcomer evidently recognized him.

"Ha! Captain Code Schofield, I presume," he announced, thrusting his hand nervously into his pocket and bringing out a fistful of papers. So eager and excited was he that, unnoticed, he dropped

one flimsy sheet, many times folded, into the grass.

"No, I'm not Schofield," rumbled Ellinwood from the depths of his mighty chest. "Get along with you now!"

"Please accept service of this paper, Captain Schofield," said the other, extending a legal-looking document, and shrugging his shoulders as though to say that Pete's denial of identity was, of course, only natural, but could hardly be indulged.

"I'm not Schofield!" bellowed Pete, outraged. "My name's Ellinwood, an' anybody'll tell you so. I won't take your durned paper. If you want Schofield find him."

The young man drew back, nonplused, but might have continued his attentions had not a passer-by come to Pete's rescue and sworn to his identity. Only then did the young lawyer — for he was that as well as private secretary — withdraw with short and grudging apologies.

Pete, growling to himself like a great bear, was starting forward to the house when his eye was caught by the folded paper that had dropped from the packet in the lawyer's hand. He stooped, picked it up, and, with a glance about, to prove that the other was out of sight, opened it.

As he read it his eyes widened and his jaw dropped with astonishment. Twice he slowly spelled out the words before him, and then, with a low whistle

and a gigantic wink, thrust the paper carefully into his pocket and pinned the pocket.

"That will be news to the lad, sure enough," he said, continuing on his way toward the house.

The little orphan girl Josie admitted him. He found Mrs. Schofield on the verge of tears. She had just been through a long and painful interview with the newcomer, and had barely recovered from the shock of what he had to tell.

Code, since learning of what was in the air, had not told his mother, for he did not wish to alarm her unnecessarily, and was confident he would get away to the Banks before the slow-moving St. John firm took action.

Pete, smitten mightily by the distress of the comely middle-aged widow, melted to a misery of unexpressible tenderness and solicitude. In his words and actions of comfort he resembled a great, loving St. Bernard dog who had accidentally knocked down a toddling child and is desirous of making amends. Ma Schofield took note of his desire to lighten her burden, and presently permitted it to be lightened.

Then they talked over the situation, and Pete finally said:

"I'm sending Jimmie Thomas down to Castalia in his motor dory to find Code. Of course, the skipper took his own dory, and we may meet him

coming back. What we want to do is head him off an' keep him away from here. Now, there's no tellin' how long he might have to stay away, an' I've been figgerin' that perhaps if you was to take him a bundle of clothes it wouldn't go amiss."

"I'll do it," announced ma sturdily. "Just you tell Jimmie to wait a quarter of an hour and I'll be along. Now, Pete Ellinwood, listen here. What scheme have you got in your mind? I can see by your eyes that there is one."

"May!" cried Pete reproachfully. "How could I have anythin' in my mind without tellin' you?"

Nevertheless, when he walked out of the cottage door it was to chuckle enormously in his black beard and call himself names that he had to deceive May.

He called Jimmie Thomas up from the duties of the paint-pot and brush, and gave him instructions as to what to do. They talked rapidly in low tones until Mrs. Schofield appeared; then Jimmie helped her into the motor dory and both men pushed off.

"I cal'late I'll have it all worked out when you come back, Jim," said Pete as the engine caught the spark and the dory moved away.

Mrs. Schofield turned around and fixed her sharp, blue eyes upon the giant ashore.

"Peter!" she cried. "I knew there was some scheme. When I get back—"

But the rest was lost, for distance had overcome her voice. Ellinwood stood and grinned benignly at his goddess. Then he slapped his thigh with an eleven-inch hand and made a noise with his mouth like a man clucking to his horse.

"Sprightly as a gal, she is," he allowed. "Dummed if she ain't!"

CHAPTER VIII

JIMMIE THOMAS'S STRATEGY

ON a chart the island of Grande Mignon bears the same relation to surrounding islands that a mother-ship bears to a flock of submarines. Westward her coast is rocky and forbidding, being nothing but a succession of frowning headlands that rise almost perpendicularly from the sea. It is one of the most desolate stretches of coast in moderate latitudes, for no one lives there, nor has ever lived there, except a few hermit dulce-pickers during the summer months.

Along the east coast, that looks across the Atlantic, are strung the villages, nestled in bays and coves. And it is out from this coast that the dozen little islands lie. First, and partially across the mouth of the bay where the fishing fleet lies, is Long Island. Then comes High Duck, Low Duck, and Big Duck. Farther south there are Ross's, White-head, and Big Wood islands, not to mention spits, points, and ledges of rock innumerable and all honored with names.

It was the fact of so many treacherous ledges and

reefs to be navigated safely in a four-knot tide that was agitating the half-dozen "guests" at Mis' Shannon's boarding house. It need hardly be said that Mis' Shannon was a widow, but her distinction lay in being called mis' instead of ma.

She made a livelihood by putting up the "runners" who made periodical trips with their sample cases for the benefit of the local tradesmen, and took in occasional "rusticators," or summer tourists who had courage enough to dare the passage of the strait in the tiny steamer.

The principal auditor of the harrowing tales that were flying about the table over the fish chowder was Mr. Aubrey Templeton, the young lawyer from St. John's who had arrived on the steamer that afternoon. Just opposite to Mr. Templeton at the table sat Jimmie Thomas, who, being a bachelor, had made his home with Miss Shannon for the last three years. And it was Jimmie who had held the table spell-bound with his tales of danger and narrow escapes.

He had just concluded a yarn, told in all seriousness, of how a shark had leaped over the back of a dory in Whale Cove and the two men in the dory had barely escaped with their lives.

"And I know the two men it happened to," he concluded; "or I know one of 'em; the other's dead. Ol' Jasper Schofield never got over the scare he got that day."

The lawyer sat bolt upright in his chair.

"Do you know the Schofields?" he demanded of Thomas.

"Guess I ought to. I've been dorymate with Code when the old man was skipper. A finer young feller ain't on this island."

"Do you happen to know where he is?" asked Templeton. "I came to Grande Mignon on several important matters, and one of them was to see him. I've tried to locate the fellow, but he seems to have disappeared."

"Why, I seen him to-day myself in Castalia!" cried Thomas. "He's up there hirin' men to ship with him. Said he was goin' to stay all night. I know the very house he's in."

"You do?"

"Yes."

"Do you think I could get there to-night?"

"You might." Jimmie looked at his watch. "The Seal Cove mail-wagon's gone long ago, but I'll take you down in my motor-dory if you'll come right now."

Templeton did not even wait to finish his supper, but went out with Thomas immediately. A few minutes' walk brought them to the little beach where the dory was drawn up and they were soon on their way. But before they left Templeton scribbled a message on a piece of paper and left it

with Mrs. Shannon to be given to Nat Burns, who, he said, was to call for him at half-past seven.

Thomas kept the nose of his dory pointed to the lights of several houses that gleamed across the bay. They were not, however, the lights of Castalia, which were almost invisible farther south. But Templeton, who had never been on Grande Mignon before, sat blissfully ignorant of this circumstance.

Later, however, he remembered that his accommodating guide had chuckled inexplicably during most of the trip.

Twenty minutes' ride in the chill night air brought them to a long, low pier that extended out into the black water. Above on the hillside the windows of the big fishing settlement on Long Island gleamed comfortable and yellow.

Thomas ran his dory close to the landing-stage and then reversed the engine so that at the time most convenient for Templeton to step off the boat had lost all motion. The lawyer landed, but Jimmie did not shut off his engine. Instead he turned it on full speed and backed away from the dock.

"Hey, you, where are you going?" called Templeton, vaguely alarmed for the first time.

"Back to the village," answered Thomas, sending his motor into the forward speed. "I got something very important to do there."

"But in which house is Schofield?" cried the other. "You said you would show me."

[There was no reply, and it is possible that, due to the noise of the engine, Thomas had not heard the protest at all.

Nat Burns arrived at Shannon's boarding-house slightly in advance of the time named, and read Templeton's note saying that he had gone to Castalia to nab Code while he had the chance.

"Who did Templeton go with?" he asked fearfully of the landlady.

"Mr. Thomas," replied that worthy.

"My God!" rapped out Burns in such a tone of disgust and defeat that she shrank from him with uplifted hands. But he did not notice her. Instead he rushed out of the house and along the road toward Freekirk Head.

The boarding-house was a full half-mile from the wharfs of the village, and after a hundred yards Burns slowed down into a rapid walk.

"The fool took the bait like a dog-fish," he snarled. "Lord knows where he is by this time. I'll bet Schofield is at the bottom of this."

He had not as yet found out where Code was, and his first step when he reached the village was to go to the Schofield cottage and verify Templeton's note.

Josie, the orphan girl, was there alone, and was on the point of tears with having been left alone so long with night coming on.

When questioned the girl admitted readily enough that Mrs. Schofield had taken a bundle of Code's clothing and gone to Castalia in the afternoon, she having overheard the conversation that took place between her mistress and Pete Ellinwood.

When he had gained this information Burns hurried from the house and toward the spot on the beach between the wharfs where his dory lay.

He had not the remotest idea what had become of Templeton, but he was reasonably sure that if Thomas had taken him to Castalia, Schofield was no longer there.

What Thomas had really done did not occur to him, and his one idea was to get to the neighboring village as soon as possible and ascertain just what had taken place.

His dory was beached alongside the pier where the *Charming Lass* had lain for the past week. Now, as he approached it, he suddenly stopped, rooted in his tracks.

The *Charming Lass* was gone.

CHAPTER IX

ON THE COURSE

“**A**LL dories aboard? All hands set tops'ls! Jimmie Thomas, ease your mainsheet! Now, boys, altogether! Yo! Sway 'em flat! Yo! Once more! Yo! Fine! Stand by to set balloon jib!”

It was broad daylight, and the early sun lighted the newly painted, slanting deck of the *Charming Lass* as she snored through the gentle sea. On every side the dark gray expanse stretched unbroken to the horizon, except on the starboard bow. There a long, gray flatness separated itself from the horizon — the coast of southern Nova Scotia.

There was a favorable following wind, and the clean, new schooner seemed to express her joy at being again in her element by leaping across the choppy waves like a live thing.

While the crew of ten leaped to the orders, Code Schofield stood calmly at the wheel, easing her on her course, so as to give them the least trouble. Under the vociferous bellow of Pete Ellinwood, the crew were working miracles in swiftness and organization.

The sun had been up two hours, and now, as Schofield glanced back at the wake that foamed and bubbled behind them, his eyes fell upon the white sails of a vessel far astern. Even at the distance, it was plain that she was of schooner rig, and probably a fisherman.

"Wonder who she is?" asked Code, pointing her out to Ellinwood.

"Don't know. Thought perhaps you'd seen her before, skipper. I've had my eye on her for an hour. Fisherman, likely; you'll see 'em in all directions every day afore we're through."

The explanation was simple and obvious, and it satisfied Schofield. He promptly forgot her, as did every one else aboard the *Lass*. And reason enough. The cook, sticking his head out of the galley, bawled:

"Mug-up! First ta-a-able!" and the first table made a rush below.

When the five men sat down it was the first time they had been able to relax since the evening before, when, without lights, and under head-sails only, the *Charming Lass* had stolen out between the reefs of Freekirk Head to sea.

"Wal, boys, I cal'late we're safe!" ejaculated Ellinwood with great satisfaction. "The *Lass* is doin' her ten knot steady, an' I guess we'll have left Cape Sable astern afore the sleepy heads at home find out what's become of us."

"You saved the day, Pete. If it hadn't been for you I would never have got beyond St. John's." It was Code who spoke.

"And you pretty near spoiled what I *did* do," rumbled Pete.

"How's that?" interrupted Thomas interestedly. "I don't know everything that happened to you fellers. I was busy at the time givin' a friend of ours a joy-ride. Tell me about it!"

"It wasn't me that nearly broke up the show, Pete," protested Code. "It was mother. Of course, when Jimmie was taking her over to Castalia in his dory he told her what was in the wind. They found me at the Pembroke place, and we all went into Pembroke's ice-house, where I was to stay until after dark. Then ma started in to find out everything.

"She allowed it wasn't honorable for me to run away when the officer or lawyer was after me. She said it proved that I was guilty, and thought I ought to stay and be served with his paper. If I wasn't guilty of anything, it could be proven easily enough, she said. Poor, honest mother! She forgot that the whole matter would take weeks, if not months, and that all that time I would be idle and discontented, and spending most of my time before boards of inquiry.

"I suppose it *will* look queer to a lot of people at

the Head because I've gone. They'll say right off: 'Just as we thought! All this talk that has been going around is true,' and put me down for a criminal that ought to go to jail. That's what mother said, and the worst part of leaving her now is that she will have to stay and face the talk — and the looks that are worse than talk.

"But, Jimmie, I couldn't do it. Grande Mignon is in too bad a hole. She needs every man who owns a schooner or a sloop or a dory to go out and catch fish and bring 'em home. The old island's got her back against the wall, and I felt that when all the trouble and danger were over for her I would go to St. John's, and let those people try and prove their case.

"They can't prove anything! But that doesn't say they won't get a judgment. I'm poor and unknown, and ignorant of law. The company is a big corporation, with lawyers and plenty of money. If somebody there is after me I haven't a chance, and they will gouge me for all they can get. You, Jimmie, and Pete know that this is so, and it was for all these reasons that I wouldn't stand my ground and let that feller serve me.

"Ma is dependent on me, and when I have sold fifteen hundred quintals of fish she will have enough to carry her along until that trouble is over. So I'm going out after the fifteen hundred quintals. Now,

that's my story. We've heard Jimmie's; but how did you manage everything so well, Pete?"

Ellinwood was flattered and coughed violently over the last of his victuals.

"Hey!" yelled some hungry member of the second half. "If you fellers eat any more you'll sink the ship. Get up out o' there an' give yer betters a chance!" Ellinwood rolled a forbidding eye toward the companionway.

"Some clam-splitter on deck don't seem to know that in this here packet the youth an' beauty is allus considered fust," he rumbled ominously. No reply being forthcoming, he turned to Code.

"When ol' Bige Tanner come to me shakin' like a leaf an' said they was a feller on the steamer that would attach yer schooner an' all that ye had, because of some business about the sinkin' of the ol' *May*, I says to myself, sez I:

" 'Pete,' I sez, 'we don't allow nothin' like that to spoil our cruise an' keep the skipper ashore.' Now, Mignon isn't very big, an' I knew he would git you in a day or two if you didn't go back into the forest and hide. But I cal'lated you wouldn't want to do that, an' so I figgered the only way to beat that lawyer was to fool him before he got fair started on his search.

"I knowed you was in Castalia, an' so I thought your mother better get you some clothes an' bring

'em there. I found out that Nat Burns had taken the feller to Mis' Shannon's boardin'-house, an', knowin' that Jimmie was livin' there, I got an idee. Jimmie's told about that already. The feller bit, an' that was the end of him.

"But that wasn't the wust of it. I knew we had to get out the same evenin' if we was to git out at all, so what did I do but get Bill Rockwell here to hitch up his big double buckboard an' go out after the five men that weren't on the job.

"He had to drive clear to Great Harbor for one, but he got back with all hands about seven o'clock. Everybody in town was at supper, an' didn't see us when we clumb aboard the *Lass*. When it was pitch-black we cast off the lines, an' she drifted out on the ebb tide, which just there runs easy a knot an' a half. Then we got up our headsails so as to get steerage-way on her, and bless my soul if the blocks made a creak! Might have been pullin' silk thread through a fur mitten, for all the noise.

"I was afraid fer a minute that the flash of Swallowtail Light would catch her topm'sts, but it didn't, and after an hour we were outside and layin' in sixteen fathom off Big Duck. The tide there runs three knot, and, with our headsails an' the light air o' wind, we just managed to hold her even.

"Of course, you fellers know the rest. As soon as Jimmie landed his passenger on Long Island he

came out an' straight south to where we was. I had told Jimmie to tell Code in the afternoon where to meet us; and so, when it was black enough, the skipper got into his motor-dory and came out, too.

"When they climbed aboard we got up sail and laid a southwest course to round Nova Scoshy; an' here we are, nearin' Cape Race already, and dummed proud of ourselves, if I do say it."

"Proud of you, Pete, you old fox," said Schofield, getting up from the table with a sigh of immense relief. "Come on; let the second half in."

"All right, skipper," said Pete, rising to his great height and wiping his mouth with the back of his huge hand. "But wait! I almost fergot this!"

He unpinned the pocket of his waistcoat and drew forth the flimsy sheet of paper that he had picked up when Templeton had mistakenly tried to serve him.

Briefly he told the skipper its history and handed it to him. Schofield's eyes opened wide as he saw that the paper was that of the Dominion Cable office in Freekirk Head, and he read:

"To A. TEMPLETON,

"Marine Insurance Company,

"St. John's, N. B.

"Come at once with summons for Cody Albert Schofield and attachment for schooner *Charming Lass*, as per former arrangements.

"BURNETT."

For a moment the signature puzzled him, and Ellinwood, grinning, stood watching his puzzled efforts to solve it.

"Skipper, if it was a mule it would kick you in the face," he remarked. "If you can't see Nat Burns in that, I can. And now you've got an idea just who's at the bottom of this thing."

Code Schofield went aft to his cabin companion-way, and prepared to go below and open his log. Kent took the wheel, and Ellinwood lurched about with a critical eye upon the lashings, sheets, and general appearance of the deck.

Schofield, remembering the schooner that had attracted his eye before, looked astern for her. She had gained rapidly upon them in the half-hour he had been below. Now he could see her graceful black hull, the shadows in the great sails, and the tiny men here and there upon her deck.

"What a sailer!" he cried in involuntary admiration. "She must be an American!"

It was clear that the other schooner, even in that moderate breeze, must be making the better side of twelve knots. Schofield gave her a final admiring glance and went below.

CHAPTER X

A MYSTERY

“AUGUST 29:

“Clear. Wind W.S.W., canting to W. Moderate breeze. Knots logged to twelve, noon, 153. Position, 20 miles south, a little east of Cape Sable. End of this day.”

Code closed the dirty and thumb-worn, paper-covered ledger that was the log of the *Charming Lass* and had been the log of the old *May Schofield* for ten years before she went down. It was the one thing he had saved. He had been on deck, taken his sextant observation, and just completed working out his position.

As he closed the old log his eye was caught by a crudely penned name near the bottom of the paper cover. The signature was Nellie Tanner's, and he remembered how, a dozen years ago, while they were playing together in the cabin of the old *May*, she had pretended she was captain and owned the whole boat, so that Code would have to obey her orders.

As he looked he caught the almost obliterated

marks of a pencil beneath Nellie's name, and, looking closer, discovered "Nat Burns" in boyish letters.

For a moment he scowled blackly at the audacious words, and then, laughing at his foolishness, threw the book from him. Then slowly the scowl returned, and he asked himself seriously why Nat hated him so.

That there had always been an instinctive dislike between them as boys, everybody in Freekirk Head knew, and several vicious fights to a finish had emphasized it.

But since coming to manhood's estate Code had left behind him much of the rancor and intolerance of his early youth, and had considered Nat Burns merely as a disagreeable person to be left heartily alone.

But Burns had evidently not arrived at this mature point of self-education. In fact, Burns was a good example of a youth brought up without those powers of self-control that are absolutely necessary to any one who expects to take a reasonable position in society even as simple as that of Freekirk Head.

Code remembered that Nat and his father had always been inseparable companions, and that it was due to this father more than any one else that the boy had been spoiled and indulged in every way.

Michael Burns had risen to a position of consid-

erable power in the humble life of the island. From a successful trawler he had become a successful fish-packer and shipper. Then he had felt a desire to spread his affluent wings, gone in for politics, and been appointed the squire or justice of the peace.

In this position he was commissioned by the Marine Insurance Company of St. John's as its agent and inspector on Grande Mignon Island. In his less successful days he had been a boat-builder in Gloucester and Bath, and knew much of ship construction.

For more than half a year now Code had been unable to think of Michael Burns or the old *May Schofield* without a shudder of horror. But now that Nat was suddenly hot on the trail of revenge, he knew he must look at matters squarely and prepare to meet any trap which might be laid for him.

It seemed evident that the first aim in Nat's mind was the hounding of the man who had been the cause of his father's death; for that death had occurred at a most opportune time for the Schofields.

The heavy insurance on the fifty-year-old *May* was about to run out, and it was almost a certainty that Burns would not recommend its renewal except at a vastly increased premium.

As a matter of fact, on a hurried trip that Code had taken, he had picked up Burns himself at St. John's, the inspector coming for the purpose of ex-

aming the schooner while under sail in a fairly heavy seaway.

All the island knew this, and all the island knew that Code was the only one to return alive. The inference was not hard to deduce, especially as the gale encountered had been one such as the *May* had lived out a dozen times.

Had not all these things been enough to fire the impulsive, passionate Burns with a sullen hatred, the next events would have been. For Code received his insurance without a dispute and, not long afterward, while in Boston for the purpose, had picked up the almost new *Charming Lass* from a Gloucester skipper who had run into debt.

Code now saw to what Nat's uncontrolled brooding had brought him, and he realized that the battle would be one of wits.

He got up to go on deck. He had only turned to the companionway when the great voice of Pete Ellinwood rumbled down to him.

"Come on deck, skipper, an' look over this schooner astern of us. There's somethin' queer about her. I don't like her actions."

Code took the steps at a jump, and a moment later stood beside Ellinwood. [The *Lass* was snoring along under full sail.

The stranger, which at eight o'clock had been five

miles astern, was now, at noon, less than a mile away.

Code instinctively shot a quick glance at the compass. The schooner was running dead east.

"What's this, Ellinwood?" demanded the skipper sharply. "You're away off your course."

"Yes, sir, and on purpose," replied the mate. "I've been watchin' that packet for a couple of hours back and it seemed to me she was a little bit too close on our track for comfort. 'What if she's from St. John's?' I sez to myself. 'Then there'll be the devil to pay for the skipper.'"

"So, after you'd got your observation and went below I just put the wheel down a trifle. I hadn't been gone away from her five minutes when she followed. It's very plain, Code, that she's tryin' to catch us."

A sudden feeling of alarm took possession of Schofield. That she was a wonderful speed craft she had already proven by overhauling the *Lass* so easily. The thought immediately came to him that Nat Burns, on discovering his absence, had sent the lawyer with the summons to St. John's, hired a fast schooner, and set out in pursuit.

"Maybe it was only an accident," he said. "She may be on the course to Sable Island. Give her another trial. Come about and head for Halifax."

"Stand by to come about," bawled Ellinwood.

Two young fellows raced up the rigging, others stood by to prevent jibing, and the mate put the wheel hard alee. The schooner's head swung sharply, there was a thunder and rattle of canvas, a patter of reef points, and the great booms swung over. The wind caught the sails, the *Charming Lass* heeled and bore away on the new course.

The men in the stern watched the movements of the stranger anxiously.

Ten minutes had hardly elapsed when she also came about and headed directly into the wake of the *Lass*. Schofield and Ellinwood looked at each other blankly.

"Are you goin' to run fer it, skipper?" asked the mate. "I'll have the balloon jib and stays'l set in five minutes, if you say so."

Code thought for a minute.

"It's no use," he said. "They'd catch us, anyway. Let 'em come up and we'll find out what they want. Take in your tops'ls. There's no use wasting time on the wrong course."

Under reduced sail the *Lass* slowed, and the pursuing vessel overhauled them rapidly. With a great smother of foam at her bows she ducked into the choppy sea and came like a race horse. In half an hour she was almost abreast on the port quarter. A man with a megaphone appeared on her poop deck

and leveled the instrument at the little group by the wheel.

"Heave to!" he bawled. "We want to talk with ye."

"Heave to!" ordered Code, and the *Charming Lass* came up into the wind just as the stranger accomplished the same maneuver. They were now less than fifty yards away and the man again leveled his megaphone.

"Is that the *Charming Lass* out of Freekirk Head?" he shouted.

"Yes."

"Captain Code Schofield in command?"

"Yes."

"Bound to the Banks on a fishin' cruise?"

"Yes."

"All right; that's all I wanted to know," said the man, and set down the megaphone. He gave some rapid orders to the crew, and his vessel swung around so as to catch the wind again.

Code and Ellinwood looked at one another blankly.

"Hey there!" shouted Schofield at the top of his voice. "Who are you and what do you want?" The skipper of the other schooner paid no attention whatever, and Schofield repeated his question, this time angrily.

He might as well have shouted at the wind. The

stranger's head fell off, her canvas caught the breeze, and she forged ahead. A minute later and she was out of earshot.

"Look for her name on the stern," commanded Code. He plunged below into the cabin and raced up again with his glasses. The mysterious schooner was now nearly a quarter of a mile away, but within easy range of vision.

Code fixed his gaze on her stern, where her name should be, and saw with astonishment that it had carefully been painted out. Then he swung his glasses to cover the dories nested amidships, and found that on them, too, new paint had obscured the name. He lowered the glasses helplessly.

"Do you recognize her, Pete?" he asked. "I know most of the schooners out of Freekirk Head and St. John's, but I never saw her before."

"Me neither," admitted the mate, with conviction. "I wonder what all this means?"

Code could not answer.

CHAPTER XI

IN THE FOG BANK

“**S**QUID ho! Squid ho! Tumble up, all hands!”

Rod Kent, the old salt who had for the past hour been experimenting over the side, leaned down the main cabin hatch and woke the port watch. Behind him on the deck a queer marine creature squirmed in a pool of water and sought vainly to disentangle itself from the apparatus that had caught it.

The shout brought all hands on deck, stupid with sleep, but eager to join in the sport.

The squid is a very small edition of the giant devilfish or octopus. It has ten tentacles, a tapered body about ten inches long, and is armed with the usual defensive ink-sac, by means of which it squirts a cloud of black fluid at a pursuing enemy, escaping in the general murk.

“How’d ye ketch him?” cried all hands, for the advent of squid was the most welcome news the men on the *Charming Lass* had had since leaving home four days before. It meant that this favorite and

succulent bait of the roaming cod had arrived on the Banks, and that the catches would be good.

"Jigged him," replied Kent laconically. He disengaged the struggling squid from the apparatus and examined the latter carefully. It was made of a single cork, through the lower edge of which pins had been thrust and bent back like the flukes of an anchor. To it was fastened a small shred of red flannel, the whole being attached to a line with a sinker.

In five minutes Code had unearthed from an old shoe-box in his cabin enough jigs to supply all hands, and presently both rails were lined with men hauling up the bait as fast as it was lured to close proximity by the color of the red flannel. Once the creatures had wrapped themselves around the cork a sharp jerk impaled them on the pins, and up they came.

But not without resistance. Just as they left the water they discharged their ink-sacs at their captors, and the men on the decks of the *Lass* were kept busy weaving their heads from side to side, to avoid the assault.

It was near evening of the second day after the mysterious schooner had hailed them and sailed away. Since that time they had forged steadily northeast, along the coast of Nova Scotia. At last they had left Cape Breton at the tip of Cape Breton Island behind them and approached the southern

shores of Newfoundland and that wonderful stretch of shoals called the Grand Banks.

Southeast for three hundred miles from Newfoundland extends this under-sea flooring of rocky shelves, that run from ninety to five fathoms, being most shallow at Virgin Rocks.

In reality this is a great submarine mountain chain that is believed at one time to have belonged to the continent of North America. The outside edge of it is in the welter of the shoreless Atlantic, and from this edge there is a sheer drop into almost unsounded depths. These depths have got the name of the Whale Hole, and many a fishing skipper has dropped his anchor into this abyss and earned the laughter of his crew when he could find no ground.

Along the top and sides of this mountain range grow vegetable substances and small animalcules that provide excellent feeding for the vast hosts of cod that yearly swim across it. For four hundred years the cod have visited these feeding grounds and been the prey of man, yet their numbers show no falling off.

To them is due the wealth of Newfoundland, the Miquelon Islands, Nova Scotia, Labrador, and Prince Edward Island.

The first manifestation of the annual visit is the arrival of enormous schools of caplin, a little silvery fish some seven inches long that invades the bays and

the open sea. Close upon them follow the cod, feeding as they come. The caplin last six weeks and disappear, to be superseded in August by the squid, of which the cod are very fond.

Up until fifty years ago mackerel were caught on the Banks, and large quantities of halibut, but the mackerel disappeared suddenly, never to return, and the halibut became constantly more rare, until at last only the cod remained.

Aboard the *Charming Lass* the squid "jigging" went on for a couple of hours. Then suddenly the school passed and the sport ended abruptly.

But the deck of the schooner was a mass of the bait, and the tubs of salt clams brought from Freekirk Head could be saved until later.

Rockwell, who had been looking out forward, suddenly called Code's attention to a flock of sea-pigeons floating on the water a mile ahead. As the skipper looked he saw the fowl busily diving and "up-ending," and he knew they had struck the edge of the Banks; for water-fowl will always dive in shoal water, and a skipper sailing to the Banks from a distance always looks for this sign.

An hour later, when the cook had sent out his call for the first half, Code made Ellinwood stay on deck and bring the schooner to an anchorage after sounding.

The sounding lead is a long slug, something like a

window-weight, at the bottom of which is a saucer-shaped hollow. The leadsman, a young fellow from Freekirk Head, took his place on the schooner's rail outside the fore-rigging. The lead was attached to a line and, as the schooner forged slowly ahead, close-hauled, the youth swung the lead in ever-widening semicircles.

"Let your pigeon fly!" cried Pete, and the lead swung far ahead and fell with a sullen *plop* into the dark blue water. The line ran out until it suddenly slackened just under the leadsman. He fingered a mark.

"Forty fathoms!" he called.

Five minutes later another sounding was taken and proved that the water was gradually shoaling. At thirty fathoms Pete ordered the anchor let go and a last sounding taken.

Before the lead flew he rubbed a little tallow into the saucer, and this, when it came up, was full of sand, mud, and shells, telling the sort of bottom under the schooner.

Pete called Code, and together they read it like a book — favorable fishing ground, though not the best.

While the second half ate, the first half took in all canvas and reefed it with the exception of the mainsail. This was unbent entirely and stowed away. In its place was bent on a riding sail, for un-

til their salt was all wet there would be very little occasion for any sort of sailing, their only progress being as they ambled leisurely from berth to berth.

"Dories overside!" sung out Code. "Starboard first."

A rope made fast to a mainstay and furnished with a hook at its end was slipped into a loop of rope at one end of the dory. A similar device caught a similar loop at the other end.

One strong pull and the dory rose out of the nest of four others that lay just aft of the mainmast. A hand swung her outboard and she was lowered away until she danced on the water.

Jimmie Thomas leaped into her, received a tub of briny squid, a dinner-horn, and a beaker of water, besides his rectangular reels with their heavy cord, leads, and two hooks.

"Overside port dory!" came the command, and Kent was sent on his way. Thus one after another the men departed until on board the *Lass* there remained only the cook and a boy helper. Code, as well as Ellinwood, had gone out, for they wished to test the fishing.

These dories were entirely different propositions from the heavy motor-boats that the men used almost entirely near the island. They were light, compact, and properly big enough for only one man, although they easily accommodated two.

The motor dories of Thomas and Code were on board, nested forward, but they were of little use here, where only short distances are covered, and those by rowing.

The nine dories drew away from the schooner, each in a different direction, until they were a mile or more apart.

Code threw over his little three-fluked anchor. Then he baited his two hooks with bits of tentacle and threw them overboard. With the big rectangular reel in his left hand, he unwound as the leads drew down until they fetched bottom and the line sagged. Unreeling a couple more fathoms of line, he cast the reel aside.

Then he hauled his leads up until he judged them to be some six feet off the bottom and waited.

Almost instantly there was a sharp jerk, and Code, with the skill of the trained fisherman, instantly responded to it with a savage pull on the line and a rapid hand-over-hand as he looped it into the dory. The fish had struck on. The tough cord sung against the gunnel, and at times it was all the skipper could do to bring up his prize, for the great cod darted here and there, dove, rushed, and struggled to avert the end.

Thirty fathoms is a hundred and eighty feet, and, with a huge and desperate fish disputing every inch of the way, it becomes a seemingly endless labor.

But at last Code, straining his eyes over the side, caught a glimpse of quick circles of white in the green and reached for the maul that was stuck under a thwart.

Two more heaves and the cod, open-mouthed, thrashed on the surface. A smart rap on the head with the maul and he came into the dory quietly. [There were little pink crabs sticking to him and he did not seem as fat as he should, although he topped the fifty-pound mark.

"Lousy!" said Code. "Lousy and hungry! It's good fishing."

With a short, stout stick at hand he wrenched the hook out of the cod's mouth, baited up, and cast again. The descending bait was rushed and seized. This time both hooks bore victims.

When there were no speckled cod on the hooks there were silvery hake, velvety black pollock, beautiful scarlet sea-perch that look like little old men, and an occasional ugly dog-fish with his Chinese jade eyes.

When the dogfish came the men pulled up their anchors and rowed a mile or so away, for where the dogfish pursues all others fly. He has the shape and traits of his merciless giant brother, the tiger-shark, with the added menace of a horn full of poison in the middle of his back instead of a dorsal fin; an evil,

curved horn, the thrust of which can be nearly fatal to a man.

The bottom of the dory became covered with a flooring of liquid silver bodies that twined together and rolled with the roll of the dory.

At five o'clock Code wound his line on the reel (he usually used two at a time, but one had been plenty with such fishing), and started to pull for the distant *Charming Lass*. He was now fully five miles from her, and his nearest neighbor was Bill Kent, three miles away. All hands were drawing in toward her, for they knew they must take a quick mug-up and then dress down until the last cod lay in his shroud of salt.

The schooner lay to the northeast of Schofield, and as he bent to his work he did not see a strange, level mass of gray that advanced slowly toward him. From a distance to the lay observer this mass would have looked like an ordinary cloud-bank, but the experienced eyes of a fisherman would have discerned its ghastly gray hue and its flat contour.

All the afternoon there had been a freshening breeze, and now Schofield found himself rowing against a head sea that occasionally slapped over the high bow of the dory and ran aft over the half ton of fish that lay under his feet.

He had not pulled for fifteen minutes when the

whole world about him was suddenly obscured by the thick, woolly fog that swirled past on the wind. It was as though an impenetrable wall had been suddenly built up on all sides, a wall that offered no resistance to his progress and yet no egress.

He immediately stopped rowing and rested his oars, listening. No sound came to him except the slap of the increasing waves and the occasional flap of a wet fish in its last struggles.

He carried no pocket compass, and the light gave no hint of the direction of the sun. In the five minutes that he sat there the head of his dory swung around and, even had he known the exact compass direction of the *Charming Lass* before the fog, he would have been unable to find it.

The situation did not alarm him in the least, for he had experienced it often before. Reaching into the bow, he drew out the dinner-horn that was part of the equipment of the dory and sent an ear-splitting blast out into the fog.

It seemed as though the opaque walls about him held in the sound as heavy curtains might in a large room; it fell dead on his own ears without any of the reverberant power that sound has in traveling across water.

Once more he listened. He knew that the schooner, being at anchor, would be ringing her bell; but he hardly hoped to catch a sound of that. In-

stead, he listened for the answering peal of a horn in one of the other dories. Straining his ears, he thought he caught a faint toot ahead of him and to starboard.

He seized his oars and rowed hard for several minutes in the direction of the sound. Then he stopped, and, rising to his feet, sent another great blast brawling forth into the fog. Once more he listened, and again it seemed as though an answering horn sounded in the distance. But it was fainter this time.

A gust of wind, rougher than the others, swirled the fog about him in great ghostly sheets, turning and twisting it like the clouds of greasy smoke from a fire of wet leaves. The dory rolled heavily, and Code, losing his balance, sprawled forward on the fish, the horn flying from his hand overboard as he tried to save himself.

For a moment only it floated; and then, as he was frantically swinging the dory to draw alongside, it disappeared beneath the water with a low gurgle.

The situation was serious. He was unable to attract attention, and must depend for his salvation upon hearing the horns of the other dories as they approached the schooner. Rowing hard all the time, with frequent short pauses, he strained his ears for the welcome sound.

Sometimes he thought he caught a faint, mellow

call; but he soon recognized that these were deceptions, produced in his ears by the memory of what he had heard before. Impatiently he rowed on.

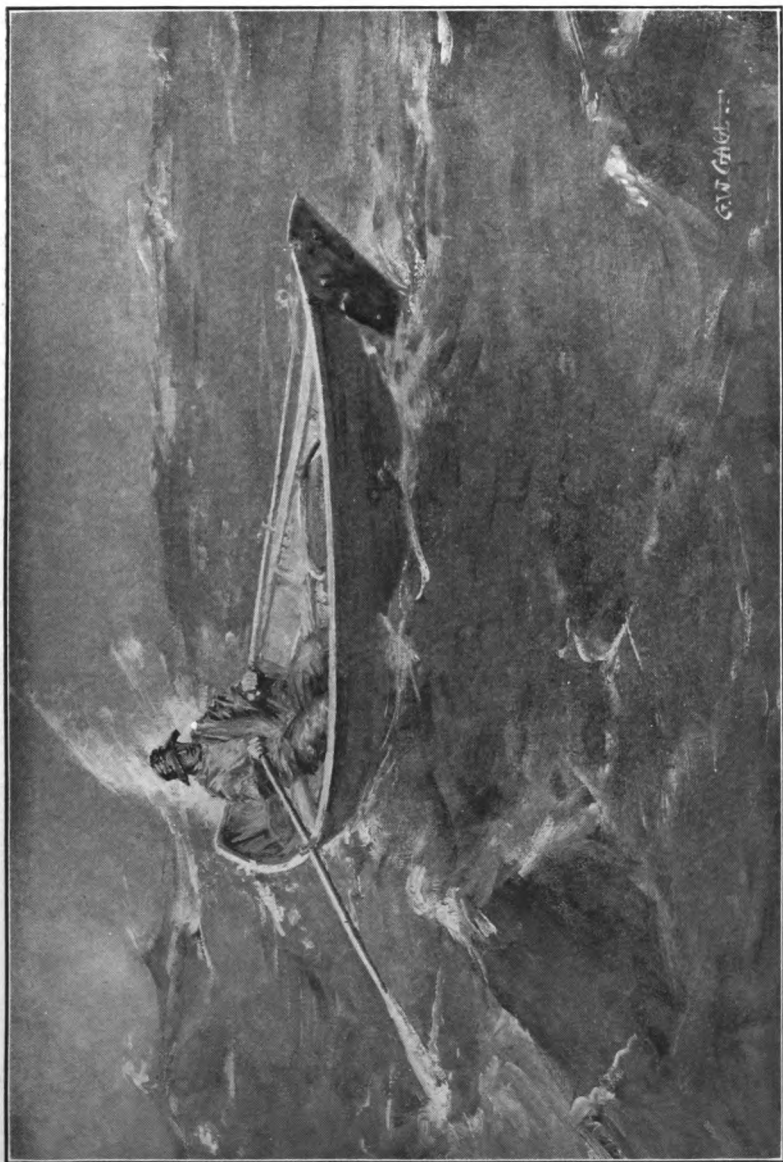
After a while he stopped. Since he could not get track of any one, it was foolish to continue the effort, for every stroke might take him farther and farther out of hearing. On the other hand, if he were headed in the right direction, another dory, trying to find the schooner, might cross his path or come within ear-shot.

He was still not in the least worried by the situation. Men in much worse ones had been rescued from them without thinking anything of them.

But the rising wind and sea gave him something to think of. The waves found it a very easy matter to climb aboard the heavily laden dory, and occasionally he had to bail with the can in the bows provided for the purpose.

An hour passed, and at the end of that time he found that he was bailing almost constantly. There was only one thing to do under the circumstances. The gaff lay under his hand. This is a piece of broom-handle, to the end of which a stout, sharp hook is attached, and the instrument is used in landing fish which are too heavy to swing inboard on the slender fishing-line.

Code took the gaff and commenced to throw the fish over the side one at a time. He hated the



By this time the wind was a gale

waste of splendid cod, but things had now got to a pass where his own comfort and safety were at stake. Once the fish were gone, with the cleanliness of long habit, he swabbed the bottom and sides of the dory with an old rag and rinsed them with water which he afterward bailed out.

The dory now rose high and dry on the waves; But Code found it increasingly difficult to row because the water tended to "crab" his oars and twist them suddenly out of his hands.

To keep his head to the wind he paddled slowly, listening for any sound of a boat.

Another hour passed and darkness began to come down. The pearly gray fog lost its color and became black, like smoke from a burning oil-tank. He knew the sun was below the horizon. He wondered if any of the other men had been caught. If none were gone but himself, he reasoned, the schooner would have come in search of him.

So, from listening for the horn of a dory, he tried to catch the hoarse voice of a patent fog-horn that would be grinding on the forecastle head.

By this time the wind was a gale, and he knew it was driving him astern, despite his rowing. The waves were no longer the little choppy seas that the *Lass* had encountered since leaving Freekirk Head, but hustling, slopping hills that attacked him in endless and rapid succession. His progress was a con-

tinuous climb to one summit, followed by a dizzying swoop into the following depth.

Each climb was punctuated at the top by a gallon or so of water slopped into the dory from the crest of the wave. These influxes became so frequent that he was obliged to bail very often. Consequently he unshipped one oar and, crawling to the stern, shipped the other in the notch of the sternboard.

Here he sculled with one hand so as to keep the dory's head to the wind, and bailed with the other. Being aft, his weight caused the water to run down to him, and he could thus perform the two operations at the same time.

When pitch-blackness had come he knew that he was out of reach of the schooner's horn. His only chance lay in the fog's lifting or the passing of some schooner.

His principal concern was for the wind. It was just the time of year for those "three-day" nor'easters that harry the entire coast of North America. When the first excitement of his danger passed he was assailed by the fierce hunger of nervous and physical exhaustion, but there was no food aboard the dory. He had, of course, the breaker of water that was part of his regular equipment; but this was more for use during a long day of fishing than for the emergency of being lost at sea.

He took a hearty drink and prepared for the long watch of the night.

By a wax match several hours later he found that it was midnight. His struggle with wind and sea had now become unequal. He found it impractical to remain longer in the stern attempting to scull. So very cautiously he set about his last defensive measure.

Taking the two oars and the anchor, as well as the thwarts, he bound them together securely with the anchor roding. This drag he hove from the bow of the dory, and it swung the boat's head into the wind. Schofield, with the bailer in one hand, lay flat in the bottom.

With the increasing sea, water splashed steadily over the sides so that his exertions never ceased. The chill of the night penetrated his soaked garments, and this, with his exhaustion, produced a stupor. The whistle of the wind and the hiss of foaming crests became dream sounds.

CHAPTER XII

OUT OF FREEKIRK HEAD

“**O**H, I wouldn't think of such a thing for a minute!”

Captain Bijonah Turner waved his hand with an air of finality and favored his daughter with a glare meant to be pregnant with parental authority.

“But, father, listen to reason!” cried Nellie; “here is mother to take care of the three small children, and here am I with nothing whatever to do. Be sensible and let me go along. I certainly ought to be able to help in some way.”

“But,” expostulated the captain, “girls don't go on fishing-trips.”

“Suppose the cook should fall sick or be hurt, then I would come in handy, wouldn't I? But all this is not the real point. Things are different with us than they have ever been before; we have no home, and mother and the children have to board with Ma Sprague. If I stayed here I should be a burden, and I couldn't stand that.”

Bijonah scratched his head and looked at the girl

helplessly. He had yet to score his first victory over her in an argument.

"Have you asked your mother?" he queried at last, seeking his time-worn refuge.

"Yes," said she, brightening at the imminence of victory, "and she says she thinks it will be just the thing."

"All right," said Bijonah weakly; "come along then. But mind, you'll find things different. Your mother is boss of any land she puts her foot on, but once I get the *Rosan* past Swallowtail my word goes."

"All right, daddy dear," laughed the girl; "I know you'll be just the finest captain I ever sailed with." She kissed him impulsively and ran upstairs to tell her mother the good news.

The departure of the fleet from Grande Mignon was a sad day in the history of the island.

The sun had hardly shown red and dripping from the sea when all the inhabitants were astir. Men from as far south as Seal Cove and Great Harbor clattered up the King's Road in rickety vehicles, accompanied by their families and their dunnage.

In Freekirk Head alone less than ten men would be left ashore. Of these, one was Bill Boughton, the storekeeper, who was to arrange for the disposal of the catch; but the others were either incapacitated, sick, or old. The five aged fishermen, who subsisted

on the charity of the town, formed a delegation on one stringpiece to wave the fleet farewell.

Altogether there were fifteen boats, ten schooners, and five sloops, carrying in all more than a hundred and twenty-five men. The whole resource of the island had been expended to provide tubs of bait and barrels of salt enough for all these, let alone the provisions.

The men either shipped on shares or, if they were fearful of chance, at a fixed monthly wage "and all found," to be paid after the proceeds of the voyage were realized.

There was not a cent of *Grande Mignon* credit left in the world, and there was no child too small to realize that on the outcome of this venture hung the fate and future of the island.

It was a brilliant day, with a glorious blue sky overhead and a bracing breeze out of the east. Just beyond Long Island a low stratum of miasmic gray was the only shred of the usual fog to be seen on the whole horizon. In the little roadstead the vessels, black-hulled or white, rode eagerly and gracefully at their moorings, the bright sun bringing out the red, yellow, green, blue, and brown of the dories nested amidships.

At seven o'clock the steamer *Grande Mignon* blew a great blast of her whistle, cast off her lines, and cleared for St. Andrew's and St. Stephens. Tooting

a long, last salute, she rolled out into Fundy and out of sight around the point.

For these men breakfast was long past, but there were the myriad last details that could not be left undone; and it was fully eight o'clock before the last dory was swung aboard and the last barrel stowed.

Then there came the clicking of many windlasses and the strain of many ropes, and to the women and girls who lined the shore these noises were as the beatings of the executioner's hand upon the cell-door of a condemned man.

For the first time they seemed to realize what was about to happen. The young girls and the brides wept, but those with children at their skirts looked stonily to the vessel that bore their loved ones; for they were hardened in the fear of death and bereavement, and had become fatalists.

The old women shook their heads, and if tears rolled down their faces they were the tears of dotage, and were shed perhaps for the swift and fleeting beauty of brides under the strain of their first long separation.

Of these last one stood apart, a shawl over her gray hair and her hands folded as though obedient to a will greater than her own. In all the color and pageant of departure May Schofield wondered where her son might be, the son whom she felt had run away from his just responsibilities. Two nights ago he had

gone, and since that time the little cottage had seemed worse than deserted.

Somehow the story of the solicitor and his visit went swiftly around the village, and since that time Code's mother had been the shrinking object of a host of polite but evidently pointed inquiries.

To most of these there was really no adequate reply, and the good woman had grown more hurt and more shrinking with every hour of the day. Now, with little orphan Josie at her side, she came out to see the departure of the fleet.

Suddenly there came the squeaking of blocks and the rattle and scrape of rings as foresails were rushed up at peak and throat. Headsails raced into position, and, with the anchors cat-headed; the vessels, with their captains at the wheels or tillers, swung into the wind and began to crawl ahead.

Behind them, as they forged toward the passage, lay the gray simitar of stony beach half a mile long. Beyond it were the white, contented-looking cottages built along the road, and back of all rose the vivid green mountains, covered with pine, tamarack, and silver birch, above whose tops at the line of the summit there appeared three terrific, puffy thunder-heads.

As they moved toward Flag Point the gaily colored crowds moved with them past the post-office, the stores, the burned wharfs, and the fish stands.

Captain Bijonah Tanner, by right of seniority, lea

the way in the *Rosan* as commodore of the fleet. He stood to his tiller like a graven image, looking neither to right nor left, but gripping his pipe with all the strength of his remaining teeth.

He hoped that his triumph would not be lost upon his wife. Nor was it, for it was a month afterward before the neighbors ceased to hear how her Bige was the best captain that ever sailed out of Freekirk Head.

At Swallowtail Bijonah rounded the point, gave one majestic wave of his hat in farewell, and put the *Rosan* over on the starboard tack, for the course was southeast, and followed practically the wake of Code Schofield.

One after another the schooners and sloops, closely bunched, came about as smartly as their crews could bring them — and the smartest of them all was Nat Burns's *Nettie B.*

Nellie Tanner, jealous for her father's prestige, could not but admire the splendid discipline and tactics that whipped the *Nettie* about on the tack and sent her flying ahead of the *Rosan* like a great sea-bird. Once Swallowtail was passed the voyage had begun, and the lead belonged to any one who could take it.

At last the knifelike edge of Long Island shut them out completely, and seemed at the same instant to cut the last bonds and ties that had stretched from one to

another as long as vision lasted. The men felt as released from a spell. One idea rushed into their minds suddenly and became an obsession.

Fish!

CHAPTER XIII

NAT BURNS SHOWS HIS HAND

OFF Cape Sable the fleet was over-hauled by a half-dozen schooners bound the same way, which displayed American flags at their main trucks as they came up.

"Gloucestermen!" said Nat Burns at the wheel of the *Nettie B.* "Set balloon-jib and stays'l and we'll give 'em a try-out."

The men jumped to the orders, and the *Nettie* gathered headway as the American schooners came up. But the Gloucester craft crept up, passed, and with an ironical dip of their little flags raced on to the Banks.

Cape Sable was not yet out of sight when a top-mast on the *Rosan* broke off short in a sudden squall. Bijonah Tanner immediately laid her to and set all hands to work stepping his spare spar, as he would not think of returning to a shipyard. Nat Burns, when he noticed the accident, laid to in turn and announced his intention of standing by the *Rosan* until she was ready to go on.

As these were among the fastest vessels in the fleet, the others proceeded on their way, and Nat seized

the opportunity of the repairs to pay his *fiancée* a visit and remain to supper on the *Rosan*.

He found Nellie radiant and more beautiful than he had ever seen her. Protected from the cool breeze by a frieze overcoat, she stood bareheaded by the forerigging, her cheeks red, her brown eyes bright like stars, and her soft brown hair blowing about her face in alluring wisps.

He took her in a strong embrace. She struggled free after a moment, her cheeks flooded with color.

"Don't, Nat!" she cried. "Before all the men, too! Please behave yourself!"

This last a little nervously as she saw the gleam in his eyes. Suddenly (for her) all the day seemed to have lost its exhilaration. She was always glad to see Nat, but his insistent use of his *fiancé* rights under all circumstances grated on the natural delicacy that was hers.

His ardor dampened by this rebuke, the gleam in Nat's eye became one of ugliness at his humiliation before the crew of the *Rosan*. He scowled furiously and stood by her side without saying a word. It was in this unfortunate moment that Nellie seized on the general topic of the day.

"Guess you'll have to get off and push the *Nettie B.* before you can beat those Gloucestermen, Nat," she said, teasing him.

"Say, I've heard about all I want to hear about

that!" he snarled, suddenly losing control of himself as they walked back to the little cabin. The girl looked at him in hurt amazement. Never in all her life had a man spoken to her in such a tone. It was inconceivable that the man she was going to marry could address her so, if he even pretended to love her.

"Possibly you have," she returned, not without a touch of asperity; "but you know as well as I do that you will have to deal with a Gloucester-built schooner before you are through with this voyage."

In her efforts to placate him she had touched upon his sorest spot. His defeat by the American fishermen had been hard for his pride.

"I suppose you mean that crooked Schofield's boat?" he flashed back, his face darkening.

"What do you mean by that?"

They were below now in her father's little cabin, and she turned upon him with flashing eyes.

"Just what I said," he returned sullenly.

"You say things then that have no foundation in fact," she retorted vigorously. "You have no right to say a thing like that about Code Schofield."

"I haven't, eh?" he sneered, furious. "Since when have you been takin' his side against me? No facts, eh? I'll show him an' you an' everybody else whether there's any foundation in fact! What do

you suppose the insurance company is after him for if he isn't a crook?"

Like all the people in Freekirk Head, Nellie had heard some of the rumors concerning Code's possible part in the sinking of the *May Schofield*. Nat, for reasons of his own, had carefully refrained from enlarging on these to her, and in the absorption of her wooing by him she had let them go by unnoticed. Now, for the first time, the consequences they might have in Code's life were made clear to her.

"I — I don't know," she faltered, unable to reply to his direct question. "But I know this, that all his life Code has been an honest man and one of my best friends. I grew up with him just as I did with you, and I resent such talk about him as much as I would if it were about you."

"Yes," he sneered, "he has been entirely too much of a good friend. What was he always over to your place for, I'd like to know? And, even after he knew we were engaged, what was he doin' down at Ma Sprague's that night I called? An' what did you go to his place for after the fire when I tried to get you to come to mine?"

The last question he roared out at the top of his voice, and the girl, now afraid of him, shrank back against the wall of the cabin.

She knew it was useless to say that she and Code had been like brother and sister all their lives, and

that May Schofield was a second mother to her. All reason was hopeless in the face of this unreasoning jealousy. After a moment she found her speech.

"I guess, Nat," she said, "you had better go back to your schooner until you are in a different mood."

"Afraid to answer, ain't you?" he cried. "When I face you down you're afraid to answer an' tell me I'd better go away. Well, now let me tell *you* something. You're entirely too friendly with that crook, an' I won't have it! You're engaged to me, and what I say goes. An' let me tell you something else.

"The insurance company is after him because he sunk the *May Schofield* on purpose. But that ain't the worst of the things he did —"

"What do you mean?" she flashed at him.

"You'll find out quick enough, and so will he," he snarled. "I'm not saying what is goin' to happen to him, but when I'm through we'll see if your hero is such a fine specimen."

From fear to anger her spirit had gone, and now under the lash it turned to cold disdain. With a swift motion of her right hand over her left she drew off the diamond ring he had given her and held it out to him.

"Take this, Nat," she said, so coldly that for once his rage was checked. He looked stupidly at the glittering emblem of her love, and suddenly became

aware of the extent to which he had driven her. The reaction was as swift as the rage.

"Please, Nellie dear," he begged, "don't do that! Take it back. Forgive me. Everything has piled up so to-day that I lost my temper. Please don't do that!"

But he had gone too far. He had shown her a new side to his character.

"No, Nat," she said calmly, but still with that icy inflection of disdain; "this has gone too far. Take this ring. Some time, when you have made amends for this afternoon, I may see you again."

"I won't take it," he replied doggedly. "Please, Nellie, forgive —"

"Take it," she flashed, "or I will throw it into the ocean!"

She had unconsciously submitted him to a final test. He was about to let her carry out her threat if she saw fit when his cupidity overcame him. He reached out his hand, and she dropped the ring into it. She stood silent, pale, and cold, waiting for him to go.

He moved away. He had reached the foot of the companionway when he turned back.

"He has brought me to this," he said so slowly and evilly that each word seemed a drop of venom. "But I'll make him pay. I'm goin' to St. John's, and when I get back it will be the sorriest day in his life

and yours, too. His life won't be worth the thread it hangs on!"

With that he went up the companionway and, not noticing the greeting of Captain Tanner, dropped into his yellow dory that swung and bumped against the *Rosan's* side. Swiftly he rowed to the *Nettie B.* and clambered aboard, bellowing orders to get up sail. In fifteen minutes the schooner was on the back track under every stitch of canvas she carried.

Bijonah Tanner stared blankly after the retreating *Nettie*. Then, knowing that his daughter had been with Nat, dropped down into the little cabin.

He found Nellie seated in the chair by the little table, and weeping.

CHAPTER XIV.

A DISCOVERY

TAKEN aback as he had been by the strange doings of Nat's schooner, his dismay then was a feeble imitation of the panic that smote him now. It had long been a favorite formula of Bijonah's that "A schooner's a gal you can understand. She goes where ye send her, an' ye know she'll come back when ye tell her to. She's a snug, trustin' kind of critter, an' she's man's best friend because she hain't got a grain o' sense. But woman!"

Here Bijonah always ended, his hands, his voice, and his sentence suspended in mid air.

Now he was baffled completely. Here was a girl who was deeply in love, crying. He tiptoed cautiously to the deck again and stole forward to the galley as though he had been detected in a suspicious action.

After a while the storm passed, and Nellie sat up, red-eyed and red-nosed, but with a measure of her usual tranquillity restored.

"Idiot!" she told herself. "To howl like that over *him!*"

Nellie finally regained her poise of mind and remembered that she had been at the point of writing a letter to her mother (to be mailed by the first vessel bound to a port) when Nat had interrupted her.

The table at which she sat was a rough, square one of oak, with one drawer that extended its whole width. She opened the drawer and found it stuffed with an untidy mass of paper, envelopes, newspapers, clippings, books, ink, and a mucilage-pot that had foundered in the last gale and spread its contents over everything.

Such was her struggle to find two clean sheets of paper and a pen that she finally dumped the contents of the drawer on top of the table and went to the task seriously. The very first thing that came under her hand was a heavy packet.

Turning it face up, she read, with surprise, a large feminine handwriting which said:

Mr. Code Schofield, kindness of Captain
B. Tanner

Letter enclosed.

At the right-hand side of the envelope was this:

5	—	10s
10	—	5s
50	—	1s
<hr/>		
\$150		

Nellie Tanner stared at the envelope. It was the handwriting that held her. She had seen it before. She had once been honorary assistant treasurer of the Church of England chapel, and it suddenly came to her that this was the handwriting that had adorned Elsa Mallaby's checks and subscriptions.

She knew she had solved the problem the instant the answer came. Elsa had been to Boston to school, and the fact was very evident. She sat and stared at the black letters, flexing the packet filled with bills.

"Why should Elsa Mallaby be sending money to Code Schofield?"

Everybody in Freekirk Head knew that Code Schofield went up to Elsa Mallaby's to dinner occasionally. So did other people in the village, but not so often as he. There had been a little gossip concerning the two of them, but, while Code was an excellent enough fellow, it was hardly probable that a rich widow like Elsa would throw herself away on a poor fisherman. They forgot that she had done so the first time she married, and that she had the sea in her blood.

These shreds of gossip returned to Nellie now with accrued interest, and she began to believe in the theory of fire being behind smoke.

She also remembered the night of the mass meeting in Odd Fellows Hall when Code had made his

suggestion of going to the Banks. There had flashed between Elsa's velvet-dark eyes and Code's blue ones a message of intimacy of which the town knew nothing. Every one saw the look, and nearly every one talked about it, but they did not know that only a couple of nights before Elsa had been the one to put Code on guard against his enemies, and that he was more than grateful.

"I'd just like to know what's in that letter so as to tease him the next time we meet," she said gaily to herself. She was now out of all mood for writing her letter home, and, stuffing the contents of the drawer back into place, she returned the latter to the table and went on deck.

The sea was running higher. The new topmast was up, and within half an hour the *Rosan* heeled to the wind and plowed her way northward after the remainder of the fleet.

CHAPTER XV

THE CATCH OF THE ROSAN

AT the forecastle head of the *Rosan* stood a youth tolling the ship's bell. The windlass grunted and whined as the schooner came up on her hawser with a thump, and overhead a useless jib slatted and rattled.

The youth could scarcely see aft of the foremast because of the thickness of the weather, but he could hear what was going on. There was a thump, a slimy slapping of wet fish, and a voice counting monotonously as its owner forked his forenoon's catch into the pen amidships.

"Forty-nine," said the voice. "All right, boys, swing her in." And a moment later the dory, hauled high, dropped down into her nest. Immediately there was a slight bump against the side of the schooner, and the slapping and counting would begin again.

"Eighty-seven, and high line at that!" said the next man. "I'll bet that's the only halibut on the Banks, and he's two hundred if he's an ounce."

The great, flat fish was raised to the deck by means of the topping haul that swung in the dories.

Bijonah Tanner, who stood by the pen watching the silver stream as it flowed over the side into the pen, mussed his beard and shook his head. The fish were fair, but not what should be expected at this time of year. He would sail along to another favorable anchorage. This was his first day on the Banks and two days after Nellie's discovery of Elsa's packet.

It was only noon, but Bijonah was speculating, and when he saw the fog-bank coming he refused to run any risk with his men, and recalled them to the schooner by firing his shotgun until they all replied to the signal by raising one oar upright.

It must not be thought that it was the fog that induced Bijonah to do this. Dorymen almost always fish when a fog comes down, and trust to their good fortune in finding the schooner. Bijonah wanted to look over the morning's catch and get in tune with the millions under his keel.

By the time the last dory was in, the pile of fish in the pen looked like a heap of molten silver.

The men stretched themselves after their cramped quarters, and greeted the cook's announcement with delight.

"You fellers fix tables fer dressin' down while the fust half mugs up," said Tanner. "Everybody lively now. I cal'late to move just a little bit. The bottom here don't suit me yet."

He went down from the poop and walked the deck,

listening between clangings of the bell for any sound of an approaching vessel. The crew worked swiftly at dressing and salting the catch.

"Haul up anchor," he ordered when the work was done.

The watch laid hold the windlass poles and hauled the vessel forward directly above her hook. Then there was a concerted heave and the ground tackle broke loose and came up with a rush.

Under headsails and riding sail the *Rosan* swung into the light air that stirred the fog and began to crawl forward while the men were still cat-heading the anchor. The youth who had been ringing the bell now substituted the patent fog-horn, as marine law requires when vessels are under way.

With his eyes on the compass, Turner guided the ship himself. They seemed to move through an endless gray world.

For an hour they sailed, the only sounds being the flap of the canvas, the creaking of the tiller ropes, and the drip of the fog. Tanner was about to give the word to let go the anchor when, without warning, they suddenly burst clear of the fog and came out into the vast gray welter of the open sea.

Tanner suddenly straightened up, and slipping the wheel swiftly into the becket, he ran to the taffrail and looked over the side.

"Good God!" he cried. "What's this?"

Not fifty feet away lay a blue dory, heavy and loggy with water, and in the bottom the unconscious figure of a man.

A second look at the face of the man and Tanner cried:

"Wheelan and Markle, overside with the star-board dory. Here's Code Schofield adrift! Lively now!"

There was a rush aft, but Tanner met the crew and drove them to the nested boats amidships.

"Over, I say!" he roared.

The men obeyed him, and Wheelan and Markle were soon pulling madly to the blue dory astern.

When they reached it one man clambered to the bow and cut the drag rope that Code, in his extremity, had thrown over nearly two days before. Then, fastening the short painter to a thwart in their own craft, they hauled the blue dory and its contents alongside the *Rosan*.

Code Schofield lay with his eyes closed, pale as wax, and seemingly dead. In his right hand he still gripped convulsively the bailing-can he had used until consciousness left him.

Man, boat, and all, the dory was hauled up and let gently down on the deck. Then the eager hands lifted Schofield from the water and laid him on the oiled boards.

"Take him into my cabin," ordered Tanner.

"Johnson, bring hot water and rags. Cookee, make some strong soup. If there's any life in him we'll bring it back. On the jump, there!"

"Wal," said one man, when Code had been carried below, "I thought my halibut was high line today, but the skipper beat me out in the end."

CHAPTER XVI

A STAGGERING BLOW

“**H**ERE is something my father just asked me to give you.”

Nellie held out to Code the packet that she had discovered in the skipper's drawer several days before. Code, seated on the roof of the cabin in the only loose chair aboard the *Rosan*, and wrapped in blankets, took the sealed bundle curiously.

He looked at the round, feminine handwriting across the envelope, and failed to evince any flash of guilt or intelligence.

It was three days after Code's rescue by the *Rosan* and the first that he had felt any of his old strength coming back to him.

For the first twenty-four hours after being revived he did nothing but sleep, and awoke to find Nellie Tanner beside his bunk nursing him. Since then it had been merely a matter of patience until his exhausted body had recuperated from the shock.

For once Nellie had command of the *Rosan*, and everything stood aside for her patient. The delicacies that issued from the galley after she had oc-

cupied it an hour, and that went directly to Code, almost had the result of inciting a mutiny among all hands; terms of settlement being the retirement of the old cook and installation of this new find.

Code ripped open the packet. He stared in amazement at the yellow bills. Then he discovered the letter and began to read it. Despite the healthy red of his weather-beaten face, a tide of color surged up over it.

Nellie turned her head away and looked over the oily gray sea to where the men of the *Rosan* were toiling in their dories. In the distance there was a sail here and there, for the *Rosan* was slowly overhauling the fleet from Freekirk Head.

Code stole a swift glance at her, and forgot to read his letter as he studied the fresh roundness and beauty of her face. He vaguely felt that there was a reserved manner between them.

"The letter is from Mrs. Mallaby," he said.

"Yes? That is interesting."

The girl's cool, level eyes met his, and he blushed again.

"She has a good heart," he stumbled on, "and always thinks of others."

"Yes, she has," agreed the girl without enthusiasm, and Code dropped the subject.

"How did your father happen to have this for me?" he asked, after a pause.

"Well, you know, you surprised everybody by leaving the Head before the rest of the fleet. Elsa had it in mind to give you this packet, she *says*, before you left. But when you went so suddenly she asked father to give it to you. She said she expected the *Rosan* would catch the *Lass* on the Banks. At least, this is the yarn dad told me."

"She seems to know considerable about the Banks and the ways of fishermen," he said, with an unconscious ring of enthusiasm in his tone.

"Yes; you'd think she pulled her own dory instead of being the richest woman in New Brunswick."

Code looked at his old sweetheart in amazement. He had never seen her so disagreeable. His eye fell upon her left hand.

For a moment his mind did not register an impression. Then all of a sudden it flashed upon him that her ring was gone.

"Oh, *that* explains everything!" he said to himself. "She has either lost it or quarreled with Nat, and it's no wonder she is unhappy."

Nellie was saying to herself: "The letter must have been very personal or he would have told me about it. He never acted like this before. There is something between them."

Suddenly astern of them sounded the flap of sails, rattle of blocks, and shouted orders. They turned

in time to see a schooner come up into the wind all standing.

She was clothed in canvas from head to foot, with a balloon-jib and staysail added, and made her position less than a hundred yards away.

Schofield gazed at the schooner curiously. Then he leaned forward, his eyes alight. There were certain points about her that were familiar. With a fisherman's skill he had catalogued her every point. He looked at the trail-board along her bows, and where the name should have been there was a blank, painted-out space.

It was the mystery schooner!

Once more all the fears that had assailed Code's mind at her first appearance returned. He was certain that there was mischief in this. But he sat quiet as the vessel drifted down upon the anchored *Rosan*.

As he looked her over his eyes were drawn aloft to a series of wires strung between her topmasts. Other wires ran down the foremast to a little cubby just aft of it.

"By the great squid, they've got wireless!" he said. "This beats me!"

At fifty yards the familiar man with the enormous megaphone made his appearance.

"Ahoy there!" he roared. "Any one aboard the *Rosan* seen or heard anything of Captain Code

Schofield, of the Grande Mignon schooner *Charming Lass?* ”

Code rose out of his chair, took off his hat ironically, and swung it before him as he made a low bow.

“ At your service! ” he shouted. “ I was picked up three days ago, adrift in my dory. What do you want with me? ”

This sudden avowal created a half panic aboard the mysterious schooner, and the man astern exchanged his megaphone for field-glasses. After a long scrutiny he went back to the megaphone.

“ Congratulations, captain! ” came the bellow. “ When are you going to rejoin the *Lass?* ”

“ As soon the *Rosan* catches her, ” replied Code, and then, exasperated by the unexpected maneuvers of this remarkable vessel, he cried: “ Who are you and what do you want that you chase me all over the sea? ”

Instantly the man put down the megaphone and gave orders to the crew, and in five minutes she was on her way north into the very heart of the fleet.

“ I don't know who she is or why she is or who is aboard her, ” he told Nellie, after recounting to her the previous visitation of the schooner. “ She reminds me of a nervous old hen keeping track of a stray chick. Pretty soon I won't be able to curse the weather without being afraid my guardian will

hear me. I say guardian, and yet I don't know whether she is friendly or merely fixing up some calamity to break all at once. You know I have enemies. She may be working for them."

The girl could offer no solution, nor could Bijonah Tanner, who had witnessed the incident from the forecastle head where he was smoking and anticipating the wishes of the cod beneath him. He had walked aft, and the three discussed the mystery.

"Ever see her before, captain?" asked Code.

If there was any man who knew schooners that had fished the Banks or the Bay of Fundy, it was Bijonah Tanner.

"Don't cal'late I ever did. I've never saw *jest* that set to a fore-gaff nor *jest* that cut of a jumbo-jib afore."

Tanner watched the schooner as she scudded away.

"Mighty big hurry, I allow," he remarked.

"But, Jiminy, doesn't she sail! There ain't hardly an air o' wind stirrin' and yet look at her go! She's a mighty-able vessel."

It was about four o'clock the next afternoon that the *Rosan* crept up in the middle of the fishing fleet. She had made a long berth overnight, dressed an excellent morning's catch, and knocked off half a day because Bijonah did not feel it right to keep Code longer away from his vessel.

And Tanner managed the thing with a good eye

to the dramatic. When he reached the rear guard of the fleet he began to work his vessel gracefully in and out among the sloops and schooners.

Code, seated in his chair on the cabin roof, did not realize what was going on until the triumphal procession was well under way.

Through the fleet they went — a fleet that was wearing crape for him — and from every vessel received a volley of cheers.

The *Charming Lass* greeted him with open arms. Pete Ellinwood swung him up from the transferring dory with a great bellow of delight, and he was passed along the line until, battered, joyous, and radiant, he arrived exhausted by the wheel, where he sat down.

When they all had drunk to the reunion from a rare old bottle, heavily cobwebbed, Code told his story. Then, while the men dressed down, he walked about, looking things over and counting the crew on his fingers.

"Pete!" he called suddenly, and the mate left the fish-pen.

"Where's Arry Duncan?"

"Wal, skipper, I didn't want to tell you fer fear you had enough on yer mind already, but Arry never come back the same day you was lost."

"My God! Another one! I wondered how many would get caught that day!"

"An' that ain't all. He had your motor-dory with him — the one you caught us with out of Castalia."

"How did he have that? I gave orders the motor-dories weren't to be used."

"Wal, cookee an' the boy — they was the only ones aboard — tell it this way: Arry he struck a heavy school fust time he lets his dory rodin' go, an' most of his fish topped forty pound. In an hour his dory was full, and it was a three-mile pull back.

"When he got in he argued them others into givin' him the motor-dory, 'cause it holds so much more. They helped him swing it over, an' that's the last they see of him."

"But, if he had an engine, you'd think he could've made it back here or run foul of somebody or some-thin'."

"Yas, you would think so; but he didn't, the more peace to him," was Ellinwood's reply.

"The poor feller!" said Code. "I'm sorry for his wife. Anything else happen while I was gone, Pete?"

"Now, let me think!" The mate scratched his head. "Oh, yes! Curse me, I nearly forgot it! You know that quair schooner that chased us down one day an' asked the fool questions about you?"

"Yes. I saw that same schooner again yesterday. She asked more fool questions."

"You did!" cried Ellinwood in amazement. "I didn't see her, but I heard her, an' I got a message from her for you. It was night when they come up on us an' hailed.

"They said they had news of you, an' would we send a dory over. Would we? They was about six over in as many minutes. But they wouldn't let us aboard. No, sir; kept us off with poles an' asked for me.

"When I got in clost they told me the *Rosan* had found you, and handed me an envelope with a message inside of it. Just as I was goin' away there came the most awful clickin' an' flashin' amidships I ever saw —"

"Wireless," said Code.

"Wal, I've heard of it, but I never see it before; an' I come away as quick as I could."

"And the message?" asked Code curiously.

Pete laboriously unpinned a waistcoat-pocket and produced an envelope which he handed to Code. It was sealed, and the skipper tore away the end. The mystery and interest of the thing played upon his mind until he was in a tremble of nervous excitement.

At last he would know what the schooner was and why.

Eagerly he opened the message. It was type-written on absolutely plain paper and unsigned, further baffling his curiosity.

After a moment he read:

"CAPTAIN SCHOFIELD:

"Yesterday at St. Andrew's suit was filed against you for murder in the first degree upon the person of Michael Burns, late of Freekirk Head, Grande Mignon Island. Plaintiff, Nathaniel Burns, son of the deceased. There is an order out for your arrest. This is a friendly warning and no more. You are now fore-armed!"

CHAPTER XVII

TRAWLERS

SCHOFIELD stood as one stupefied, staring blankly at the fateful words.

Murder in the first degree!

Had it not been for his thorough knowledge of Nat Burns's character he would have laughed at the absurdity of the thing and thrown the message over the side.

But now he remained like one fast in the clutch of some horrible nightmare, unable to reason, unable to think coherently, unable to do anything but attempt to sound the depths of a hatred such as this.

"For Heaven's sake, what is it, skipper?" asked Ellinwood.

Code passed the message to his mate without a word. His men might as well know the worst at once. Ellinwood read slowly.

"Rot!" he snarled in his great rumbling voice. "Murder? How does he get murder out of it?"

"If I sank the old *May Schofield* for her insurance money, which is what every one believes, then I deliberately caused the death of the men with me, didn't I? Pete, this is a pretty-serious thing. I

didn't care when they set the insurance company on me, but this is different. If it goes beyond this stage I will carry the disgrace of jail and a trial all my life. That devil has nearly finished me!"

Code's voice broke, and the tears of helpless rage smarted in his eyes.

"Steady on, now!" counseled Pete, looking with pity at the young skipper he worshiped. "He's done fer you true this time, but the end of things is a tarnal long ways off yet, an' don't you go losin' yer spunk!"

"But what have I ever done to him that he should start this against me?" cried Schofield.

Pete could not answer.

"What do they do when a man is accused of murder?" asked Code.

"Why, arrest him, I guess."

Pete scratched his chin reminiscently. "There was that Bulwer case." He recounted it in detail. "Yes," he went on, "they can't do nothin' until the man accused is arrested.

"After that he gets a preliminary hearin,' and, if things seem plain enough, then the grand jury indicts him. After that he's tried by a reg'lar jury. So the fust thing they've got to do is arrest you."

"Darn it, they sha'n't — I'll sail to Africa first!" snarled Code, his eyes blazing. He strode up and down the deck.

"You say the word, skipper," rumbled Pete loyally, "an' we crack on every stitch fer the north pole!"

Code smiled.

"Curse me if I don't like to see a man smile when he's in trouble," announced Pete roundly. "Skipper, you'll do. You're young, an' these things come hard, but I cal'late we'll drop all this talk about sailin' away to furrin parts.

"Now, there's jest two courses left fer you to sail. Either we go on fishin' an' dodge the gunboat that brings the officer after you, or we go on fishin' an' let him get you when he comes. I'll stand by you either way. You've got yer mother to support, God bless her! An' you've got a right to fill yer hold with fish so's she can live when they're sold. That's one way of lookin' at it; the other's plain sailin'!"

"No, Pete; this is too serious. I guess the mother'll have to suffer this time, too. If they send a man after me I'll be here and I'll go back and take my medicine. I'll make you skipper, and you can select your mate. You'll get a skipper's share, and you can pay mother the regular amount for hiring the *Lass* —"

"She'll get skipper's share if I have to lick every hand aboard!" growled Ellinwood. "An' you can rest easy on that."

"That's fine," said Code gently; "and I don't know what I'd do without you, Pete."

"You ain't supposed to do without me. What in thunder do you suppose I shipped with you fer if it wasn't to look after you, hey?"

The men had finished dressing down and were cleaning up the decks. Several of them, noticing that something momentous was being discussed, were edging nearer. Pete observed this.

"Skipper," he said, "we've got four or five shots of trawl-line to pick. Suppose you and I go out an' do the job? Then we can talk in peace. Feel able?"

"Never better in my life. Get my dory over."

"That blue one? Never again! That's bad luck fer you. Take mine."

"All right. Anything you say."

Several hands made the dory ready. Into it they put three or four tubs or half casks in which was coiled hundreds of fathoms of stout line furnished with a strong hook every two or three feet. Each hook was baited with a fat salt clam, for the early catch of squid had been exhausted by the dory fishing. There was also a fresh tub of bait, buoys, and a lantern.

A youth aboard clambered up to the cross-trees, gave them the direction of the trawl buoy-light, and they started. It was a clear, starlit night with only

a gentle sea running and no wind to speak of. There was not a hint of fog.

The *Charming Lass* lay now in the Atlantic approximately along the forty-sixth parallel, near its intersection with the fifty-fifth of meridian; or eighty to a hundred miles southwest of Cape Race, Newfoundland, and almost an equal distance southeast of the Miquelon Islands, France's sole remaining territorial possession in the New World.

Code and Ellinwood easily found their trawl buoy by the glimmer of the light across the water. They immediately began to plant the trawl-lines in the tubs aboard the dory. The big buoy for the end of the line they first anchored to the bottom with dory roding.

Then, as Ellinwood rowed slowly, Code paid the baited trawl-line out of the tubs. As there are hooks every few feet, so are there big wooden buoys, so that the whole length of the line — sometimes twenty-five hundred feet — is floated near the surface.

When the last had been paid out, a second anchor and large buoy was fixed, and their trawl was "set." Next they turned their attention to picking the trawl already in the water.

As the line came over the starboard gunnel Code picked the fish off the hooks, passing the hooks to Pete, who baited them and threw them over the port

gunnel. Thus they would work their way along the whole of the line.

Many of the hooks that came to Code's hands still had the bait with which they were set.

"Must be in the bait," he told Ellinwood. "The fish wouldn't touch it. This is no catch for five shots of trawl."

But Pete could not cast any light on the subject.

It was certainly true that the catch from the trawl-line was small enough to be remarkable, but the men were helpless to explain the reason.

For two hours they worked along the great line.

"There's a bare chance that the message from the unknown schooner might be a fake, although I can't imagine why," said Code as they were returning. "But if it is not, and the Canadian gunboat comes after me, she'll find me here, willing to go back to St. Andrew's and answer all charges. No escape and no dodging this time! And let me tell you something, Pete. If nothing comes out of this except ugly rumor that I have to suffer for, I'm going to quit minding my own business; and I'll dig up something that will drive Nat Burns out of Free-kirk Head forever.

"A man of his character and nature has certainly got something he doesn't want known, and I shall bring it to light and make it so public that he'll wish he had never heard the name Scho-

field. By Heaven, I've reached the end of my patience!"

If there was anything Pete Ellinwood loved it was a fight, and at this declaration of war he roared encouragement.

"You'll do, skipper — you'll do! Get after him! Climb his frame! Put him out of business. An' let me help you. That's all I want."

"Everything in good time, Pete," grinned Code. "First we've got to find out how much of this is in the wind and how much is not."

Arrived at the schooner, they pitched their fish into the pen for the first watch to dress and rolled aft for the night. Code took off his coat and drew forth the packet that Elsa had given him, looked at it for a moment, and threw it upon the table.

"Why in time did she send me that?" he asked himself, his voice very near disgust. "It must have looked mighty strange to Nell for me to be getting money from Elsa Mallaby."

He stopped short in the midst of pulling off one boot. The idea had never struck him forcibly before. Now it seemed evident that Nellie's reserve might have been due to the letter.

"What a fool I was not to tell her all about it!" he cried. With one boot off he reached across to the packet under the swinging lamp and drew the letter out of it and read:

"DEAR PARTNER:

"Here is something that Captain Bijonah will hand to you when he catches the *Lass*. There are supposed to be one hundred and fifty dollars in this packet (I never was much of a counter, as you know). Now, dear friend, this isn't all for you unless you need it. It is simply a small reserve fund for the men of the fleet if they should need anything — a new gaff, for instance, or a jib, or grub.

"It isn't much, but you never can tell when it might come in handy. It was your good scheme that sent the men off fishing, and you left the way open for me to do my little part here at the Head. Now I want to do just this much more for the sailors of the fleet, and I am asking you to be my treasurer. When you hear of a needy case just give him what you think he needs and say it is a loan from me if he won't take a gift.

"If this is a trouble to you I am sorry, but we are all working for the good name and good times of Grande Mignon, and I hope you won't mind. Good fishing to the *Charming Lass*, high line and topping full! May you wet your salt early and come home again to those who are longing to see you.

"This is all done on the spur of the moment, so I have no time to ask your mother to enclose a line. But I know she sends her love. It has been a little hard for her here since you left, bless

her heart; but she has been as brave as a soldier and helped me very much. We see a great deal of each other and you can rest assured I shall look after her.

“Always your old friend,
“ELSA.”

As Code read the last paragraph his eyes softened. It *was* white of Elsa to look after his mother, particularly now when there would be much for her to face regarding himself. And it *was* white of her to send the money for the sailors of the fleet. Even she did not know, as Code did, how nearly destitute some of the dorymen were. He would be glad to do what little work there might be in disbursing the sum.

“Sorry Nellie didn’t seem interested when I began to talk about Elsa,” he said to himself. “I suppose I should have told her, anyway, so there wouldn’t be any misunderstanding. Well, I’ll do it next time.” He turned the lamp low and rolled into his bunk.

CHAPTER XVIII

TREACHERY

NEXT morning at breakfast, about four o'clock, Code told his crew the situation. He knew his men thoroughly and had been friends with most of them all his life.

"There's likely to be trouble, and I may be taken away, but if that happens Pete will tell you what to do. Don't sight Swallowtail until your salt is all wet. Bring home a topping load and you'll share topping."

Code did not go out that morning. Instead, he tried to shake off his troubles long enough to study the fish — which was his job on the *Charming Lass*.

While not a Bijonah Tanner, Code bade fair to be his equal at Bijonah's age. He came of a father with an instinct for fish, and he had inherited that instinct fully. Under Jasper he had learned much, but it was another matter to have some one on hand to read the signs rather than being cast upon his own resources.

The fish, from the trawl-line and Pete's reports of dory work, had been running rather big. This

pleased him, but he knew it could not last; and he sat with his old chart spread out before him on the deck — a chart edged with his father's valuable penciled notes.

Suddenly, while in the almost subconscious state that he achieved when very "fishy," the persistent voice of the cook broke through the wall of unconsciousness.

"Smoke on the port quarter, skipper! Smoke on the port quarter, skipper!"

The phrase came with persistent repetition until Code was fully alive to its meaning and glanced over his left shoulder.

Above the line of dark blue that was the ocean, and in the light blue that was the sky, was etched a tree-shaped brown smudge.

Steamer smudges were not an unusual sight, for not fifty miles east was the northern track of the great ocean steamers — a track which they were gradually approaching as they made their berths. But a steamer smudge over the port quarter, with the *Lass's* bow headed due north, was an entirely different thing.

Code went below and brought up an ancient fire-arm. This he discharged while the cook ran a trawl-tub to the truck. It was the prearranged signal for Pete Ellinwood to come in.

As Code waited he had no doubt that smoke was

from a revenue cutter or cruiser from Halifax with his arrest warrant.

There was a stiff westerly breeze, and Code, glancing up at the cloud formations, saw that there would be a beautiful racing half-gale on by noon.

"What a chance to run for it!" he thought, but resolutely put the idea from his mind.

Pete came in with a scowl on his face, cursing everything under the sun, and especially a fisherman's life. When told of the smoke smudge he evinced comparatively little interest.

"We'll find out what she is when she gets here. What I'd like to know is, what's the matter with our bait?"

"Bait gone wrong again?" asked Code anxiously, his brows knitting. "That stuff on the trawl wasn't the only bad bait, then."

"No. Everybody's complainin' this mornin'.

"Not only can't catch fish, but ye can't hardly string the stuff on the hooks. An' that ain't all. It has a funny smell that I never found in any other clam bait I ever used."

"Why, what's the matter with your hands, Pete?" cried Code, pointing. Ellinwood had removed his nippers, and the skin of his fingers and palms was a queer white and beginning to shred off as if immersed long in hot water.

"By the Great Seine!" rumbled the mate, looking at his hands in consternation.

Code made a trumpet of his hands. "Here, cookee, roll up a tub of that bait lively. I want to look at it. And fetch the hammer!"

A suspicion based upon a long-forgotten fact had suddenly leaped into his mind.

When the cook hove the tub of bait on deck Code knocked off the top boards with the hammer and dipped up a handful of the clams. Instead of the firm, fat shellfish that should have been in the clean brine, he found them loose and rotten. This time he himself detected a faint acrid odor quite different from the usual clean, salty smell. Again he dipped to make sure the whole tub was ruined. Then he looked at Ellinwood in despair.

"It's acid, Pete," he said. "My father told me about this sort of thing being done sometimes in a close race among bankers for the last load of fish. If they're all like this we're done for until we can get more."

Ellinwood looked at him in amazement, his jaw sagging.

"Well, who in thunder would do this?"

Code laughed bitterly.

"There's only one man I can think of, and that is the fellow who got my motor-dory under false

pretenses. You remember how he made the cook and the boy help him get it over the side? Well, her gasoline-tank was full and her batteries new. She was ready to go two hundred miles on a minute's notice."

"But why should he do that —"

"Oh, think, Pete, *think!* Don't you remember? He's one of the men I went up to Castalia to get, the time that lawyer came to Freekirk Head. And he's the only man in the whole crew I don't know well. I see it all now. He sent me a note the night before asking to ship on the *Lass*, and I went to get him before any of the other skippers got wind of it. You don't suppose he did this thing on his own account, do you?"

"Easy, skipper, easy! What's he got against you?"

"*He's* got nothing against me!" cried Code passionately. "But he is working for the man who has. Do you think that stupid ox would have sense enough to work a scheme like this? Never! Nat Burns is behind this, and I'll bet my schooner on it!"

Schofield dumped the bait-tub over the deck and rolled it around, examining it. Suddenly he stopped and peered closely.

"Look here!" he cried. "Here's proof!"

With a splitting knife that he snatched out of a cleat he pried loose a tiny plug in one of the bottom

boards that had been replaced so carefully that it almost defied detection.

"The whole thing is simple enough. He turned the tub upside down, cut out this plug, and inserted the acid. Then he refitted the plug and set it right side up again. It's as plain as the nose on your face."

"By thunder, I believe you're right, skipper!" said Ellinwood solemnly. "The dirty dog! Cookee, run that tub up to the truck again. We'll have to call the men in on this."

"Oh, he was foxy, that one!" said Code bitterly. "Going out in the fog that way so all hands would think he was lost! I never remembered until this minute that the motor-dory could be run. I guess she went, all right, and that scoundrel is ashore by this time."

"Had a bad name in Castalia, didn't he?"

"Oh, a little more or less than I heard of, but what's that in a fisherman? When the men come in have them go through all the bait."

Pete fired the old rifle, and the crew at work began to pull in through the choppy sea.

"Hello!" cried the mate, looking behind him. "There's something going to be doin' here in a minute. It's the cutter from Halifax, all right."

Code, his former danger forgotten for the time, glanced up. The smudge of smoke had quickly re-

solved itself into a stubby, gray steam-vessel with a few bright brass guns forward and a black cloud belching from her funnel. She was still some five miles away, but apparently coming at top speed.

Three miles before her, with all sails set, including staysail and balloon-job, raced a fishing schooner. There was a fresh ten-knot wind blowing a little south of west — a wind that favored the schooner, and she was putting her best foot forward, taking the green water over her bows in a smother of foam.

“Heavens! look at her go!”

The exclamation was one of pure delight in the speed.

“Maybe she’s an American that’s been caught inside the three-mile limit, and is pullin’ away from the gunboat,” remarked Pete.

[That she was pulling away there was little doubt. In the fifteen minutes that elapsed after her discovery she had widened the gap between herself and her pursuer. She was now within a mile of the *Lass*.

“Why doesn’t she shoot?”

As Code spoke a puff of white smoke thrust out from the blunt bows of the cutter, and the ball ricocheted from wave-top to wave-top to fall half a mile astern of the schooner.

“Out of range now, an’ if the wind holds she’ll be out of sight by nightfall,” said Pete, who was

moved to great excitement and enthusiasm by the contest. "Wonder who she is?"

He plunged down the companionway to the cabin and emerged a moment later with Code's powerful glasses.

But Code did not need any glasses to tell him who she was. His eye had picked out her points before this, and the only thing that interested him was the fact that her wireless was down.

It was the mysterious schooner.

He had never seen her equal for traveling, and he knew that she must be making a good fourteen knots, for the cutter was capable of twelve.

She had reached her closest point of contact with Code's vessel and had begun to bear away when Pete leveled his glasses. It was on Schofield's tongue to reveal the identity of the pursued when Ellinwood yelled:

"Good Heavens! Skipper! She has *Charming Lass* printed in new gold letters under her counter!"

"What?"

"As I live, Code. *Charming Lass*, as plain as day! What's happening here to-day? What is this?" Code snatched the glasses from Pete's hand and then leveled them, trembling, at the flying schooner.

For a time the foam and whirl of her wake ob-

scured matters, but all at once, as she plunged down into a great hollow between waves, her stern came clear and pointed to heaven. There, in bright letters that glinted in the sun and were easily visible at a much greater distance, was printed the name:

CHARMING LASS
OF
FREEKIRK HEAD

"No wonder she's goin'!" yelled Pete, almost beside himself with excitement. "No wonder she's goin'! But let her go! More power to her! Yah!"

Code stood with the glasses to his eyes and watched the mysterious schooner and the pursuing vessel disappear.

CHAPTER XIX

ELLINWOOD TAKES A HAND

THERE were two things for Code to do. One was to sail north into Placentia Bay, Newfoundland, set seines, and catch the herring that were then schooling. The other was to run sixty miles or so northeast to St. Pierre, Miquelon, and buy bait.

Under ordinary circumstances he would not have hesitated. It would have been Placentia Bay without question. But his situation was now decidedly out of the ordinary. He was in a hurry to fill his hold with cod before the other men out of Freekirk Head; first, for the larger prices he would get; and secondly, because he yearned to come to grapples with Nat Burns.

To seine for herring would lose him upward of a week; to buy it would take less than three days, including the round trip to St. Pierre.

But the money?

Code knew that in the French island herring seldom went below three dollars a barrel, and that the smallest amount he ought to buy would be twenty-

five barrels. Later on, if the fishing was good, he might send out a party to set the seines, but not now. He must buy. But the money!

Then he thought of the packet of money Elsa Mallaby had sent him. The cash was meant for any sailor who came to need it.

And the men with him were willing to fight to the last ditch and to take their lot ungrudgingly as fishermen early learn to do.

If he starved, they starved. So he decided he would not hesitate to use Elsa's money when a dozen men and their families were dependent upon him and the success of the cruise.

Thus the matter was settled and the order roared down the decks:

"Set every stitch for St. Pierre; we're going to bait up there. Lively, now!"

St. Pierre, Miquelon, is one of the quaintest towns in all of picturesque French Canada. It is on the island of the same name (there are three Miquelon islands), which is in itself a bold chunk of granite sticking up out of the ocean at a distance of some ten miles southwest of May Point, Newfoundland.

Rough and craggy, with few trees, sparse vegetation, and a very thin coating of soil, there is no agriculture, and the whole glory of the island is centered in the roaring city on its southeast side.

It is a strange city, lost in the midst of busy up-to-

date Canada, with French roofs, narrow tilting streets, and ever the smell of fish. There is a good harbor, and there are wharfs where blackfaced men with blue stockings, caps, and gold earrings chatter the patois and smoke their pipes. In the busy time of year there are ten thousand men in the town and it is a scene of constant revelry and wildness.

The *Charming Lass* touched the port at the height of its season — early September — and, because of the shallowness of the harbor close in, anchored in the bay amid a crowd of old high-pooped schooners, filled with noisy, happy Frenchmen. There were other nationalities, too, in the cosmopolitan bay — Americans setting a new spar or Nova Scotians in on a good time.

The *Charming Lass* cast her anchor shortly before six o'clock, having made the run in five and a half hours with a good breeze behind. Code and Ellinwood immediately went over the side in the brown dory of the mate and pulled for the custom-house wharf. The rest of the crew were forbidden off the decks except to sleep under them, for it was intended, as soon as the bait was lightered aboard, to make sail to the Banks again.

The bait industry in St. Pierre is one more or less open to examination. It is the delight of certain French dealers to go inside the English three-mile limit, load their vessels with barrels of herring, and

return to St. Pierre. Here they sell them at magnificent profit to Frenchmen, Englishmen, and Americans. And, as the British coat of arms is not stamped on herring at birth, no one can prove that they were not legally procured.

But let a Canadian revenue cutter catch a Frenchman (or American either, for that matter), dipping herring in any out-of-the-way inlet, and the owner not only pays a heavy fine, but he often loses his schooner and his men go to jail for trying to hoist sail and escape at the last minute.

Code had not reached shore before he had been accosted by fully half a dozen of these bait pirates. But he passed them, and tying his dory at the wharf, went on up the street to a legitimate firm.

Immediately the business was finished, Code and Pete Ellinwood started back to the wharf.

The main street was ablaze with lights. Cafés, saloons, music halls, catch-penny places — in fact, every device known to separate sailors from their wages was in operation. The sidewalks were crowded with men, jabbering madly in the different dialects of their home provinces (for many come here from France yearly).

"Queer lot, these frog-eaters," said Pete, going into the street so as to avoid a thick, pushing crowd.

"Yes, they would come to a knifing over a count of fish and yet give their schooners to a friend in

trouble. Too bad they ain't better fishermen."

"Yeah, ain't it."

Among Canadians and Americans the Frenchmen are held in contempt on account of their hooks, which are of soft metal and can be rebent and used again. The fish often get away with them, however, and these hidden hooks slit many a finger in dressing down.

The two comrades loitered along, watching the changing crowds, gay with their colored caps and scarfs. Some men were already in liquor, and all seemed to be headed in that general direction. Suddenly, as Code was about to urge Pete along, he gave an exclamation and stopped short.

"What's the matter, skipper?"

"I wonder where he is now?" Code's eyes were searching the crowd. "I saw him right over there."

He pointed to a certain spot.

"Who? What? Are you crazy, Code?"

"'Arry Duncan, the traitor that ruined our bait. I'd have sworn I saw him. It came all of a sudden and went away again. But I guess it couldn't have been anything but a close resemblance." He laughed nervously. "Gave me the creeps for a minute, though."

"Lor-rd!" shivered Pete, who had all the superstitions of the sea at his fingers' ends. "Mebbe

he's chasin' us around fer wrongly accusin' him. They do that sometimes, you know. He's probably dead an' that's his sperrit, ha'ntin' us."

"Oh, rot, Pete!" growled Code in his most forcible manner. "Come along now or you'll be sidling into one of these doors and the *Lass* won't get out of port for a week."

"My soul an' body! Look at that Frenchy. Biggest I ever saw, Code."

They had returned to the sidewalk, and Pete forgot that he himself rose fully as high above the crowds as this stranger. In fact, nearly every one turned to take a look at the huge islander, who, in reality, stood six feet four, barefoot.

They were pushing down-street against the tide and making rather heavy going of it. Code maneuvered so as to pass well to leeward of the big man who, he could see plainly, was just tipsy. But somehow the eyes of the two giants met, and the Frenchman seemed to crush his way through the crowd in Ellinwood's direction.

"Come on, Pete; get out of here before there's any trouble," commanded Code. He knew the mate's weakness for fighting.

The big Frenchman, who wore tremendous earrings, a bright scarlet cap with a blue tuft, and a gay sash, lurched through the crowd and against Pete

Ellinwood with a malice only too plain. But his effort was attended with failure. Not only did Pete stand like a rock, but he thrust the other violently back with his shoulder, so that he recoiled upon those behind him, earning their loud-voiced curses.

"*Mille tonnerres!*" bellowed the Frenchman. "You insult me, *cochon Canadien*, Canadian pig! The half of sidewalk is mine, eh? You push me off, eh? You fight, eh?"

Code urged Ellinwood along and interceded personally, knowing that the big man would not touch him.

But the Frenchman would not be appeased. He was just drunk enough to become obsessed with the ugly idea that Pete had laid a trap to insult him, and, regardless of Code, kept after the mate.

By this time, of course, a huge crowd had gathered and was following Pete's retreat, yelling to both men to fight it out. Many of the mob knew a few English words, and their taunts reached Ellinwood's ears.

He and Code had not retreated a block before the mate suddenly swung around on his tormentors.

"I won't stand for that, Code. Did you hear what that big devil called me?" he demanded.

"What do you care what he called you? Get along to the ship. What chance have we got with

these men?" Code grabbed Pete's arm and kept him moving away. Beneath his hand he could feel the muscles as hard as iron.

But every foot the Canadians retreated brought the big Frenchman nearer, bawling with triumph. At an opportune moment, so close was the press, he slipped his foot between Ellinwood's legs and gave him a push. Pete stumbled, almost fell, and recovered himself, raging.

"Get back you!" he bawled, sending half a dozen men spinning with sweeps of his great arms. "I'll fight this Frenchy. Just let me at him!"

Code saw the rage in Pete's eyes and recognized that he could do nothing more to avert the trouble. His part would have to be confined to seeing that his man got a fair deal. He and Pete were unarmed except for their huge clasp-knives — much better kept out of sight under the circumstances.

The crowd fell back, and the two giants stripped off their coats and shirts. The Frenchman danced up and down, beating his great fists together in a fine frenzy, but Pete, half-crouched, stepped forward on his toes, his hands hanging loose and ready at his sides.

"*Allez, donc!*" It was the starting word, and Jean leaped in. Pete met him with a crashing right to the ribs and dodged out of reach of the clutching hands that reached for his throat. They circled

around a moment and again the Frenchman came, this time in one great leap.

On the instant Ellinwood jumped in to meet him. There was a swift flying of arms, a pounding of the great fists, and Pete suddenly shot back from the mêlée and landed on his back in the dirt. One of the Frenchman's great swings had landed. But he was up in an instant and went after his opponent again.

Jean saw now that he had another man to deal with — unlike a Frenchman, an Anglo-Saxon cannot fight without sufficient provocation. Now all the battle was aroused in Ellinwood, for aside from the shame of his downfall, the crowd was yelling at the top of its voice. Jean began to run away, circling round and round the ring of spectators, Pete after him.

Suddenly he made a stand, but the mate was ready for him. Dodging the straight left, Pete hurled himself forward and seized the burly Frenchman in his arms. Then, with a tug and a wrench, as though he were uprooting a tree, he lifted his opponent and crashed him down to the earth.

Jean, stunned, and with a broken arm, sought to get up. He gained his feet and, game to the last, staggered toward Ellinwood. Pete started to run in again, but some one on the edge of the crowd thrust a foot out and the big islander stumbled.

Code saw the man who interfered, and, his blood boiling, leaped for him. At the same instant there came a cry of "Police! Police!" But Code did not hesitate. He plunged into the crowd after his man and, in an instant, found himself surrounded and fighting the whole mob.

For a moment it lasted. There was a rain of heavy blows that blinded him, and then something that was hard and dull struck him on the head. Everything began to whirl, and he found he could not lift his arms. Dimly he heard a voice near him shout: "This way!" in English and felt himself gathered up by men and borne swiftly away.

Then consciousness left him.

CHAPTER XX

AMONG THE HOME FOLKS

THE village of Freekirk Head was a changed place.

No longer of early mornings did the resounding *pop! pop!* of motor-dories ring back from the rocks and headland as the trawlers and hand-liners put to sea. No longer did the groups of weary fishermen gather on the store steps for an evening pipe and chat or the young bloods chuck horseshoes at the foot of the chapel hill.

It was a village of women. True, Squire Hardy, being too old to fish, had remained at home, and Bill Boughton, who was completing details for the immediate and profitable sale of the season's catch, was behind the counter of his general store.

He dealt out supplies to the women and children, and wrote down against their fathers' shares the amount of credit extended. But others, day after day, found nothing set against them, and this was due to the promise of help that Elsa Mallaby kept.

"It's useless to charge supplies to those who have nothing now with the idea of getting it back from

their fishing profits," she said. "What they earn will just about pay for it, and then there they are back where they started—with nothing. Better let me pay for everything until the men get back. Then they will have something definite ahead to go on."

No one but Adelbert Bysshe, the rector, Bill Boughton, and Elsa Mallaby herself knew exactly how much she paid out weekly toward the maintenance of the village. But all knew it to be an enormous sum (as reckoned on the island), and daily the worship of Hard Luck Jim's widow grew, until she occupied a place in Freekirk Head parallel to a patron saint of the Middle Ages.

But Elsa Mallaby was intensely human, and no one knew it better than herself, as, one late afternoon, she sat at her mahogany table, looking absently over the stubs in her check-book. She saw that she had disbursed a great deal of money—more, perhaps, than she would have under any other circumstances—but she frankly acknowledged that she did not mind that, if only she achieved the end toward which she was working.

For Elsa, more than any one on Grande Mignon, was a person of ways and means.

She was one of those women who seem to find nothing in self-communion. Hers was a nature destined for light and gaiety and happiness. To sit in

a splendid palace and mope over what had happened was among the last things she cared to contemplate.

Being of the pure Grande Mignon stock, she looked no farther for a husband than among the men of Freekirk Head, good, honest, able men, all of them. And her eye fell with favor upon Captain Code Schofield of the schooner *Charming Lass*, old schoolfellow, playmate, and lifelong friend.

The money she had mailed to him had only been an excuse to write a letter; the favors to Ma Schofield were, in great part, to help further her plan; the whole business of helping support Freekirk Head was a flash of dramatic display, calculated to bring her ineradicably before Code's eyes — and every one else's.

As she sat near the window and saw the sunset glow die over the mountain ridge she asked herself what she had achieved. Apparently very little. She felt the futility of human endeavor and desire. To her knowledge Code was in love with nobody, although rumor had for years linked his name with Nellie Tanner's. That was exploded now, for Nellie was engaged to Nat Burns.

Why did he not respond?

Slowly her smile returned. He would respond when he had heard certain other things. Then he would forget any one else but her — if there was any one else. Her heart leaped at the thought.

As it became dark she rang the bell.

"Light the candles in the drawing-room," she said to the servant who entered. "You remember that Mrs. Tanner is coming for dinner?"

"Yes, madam."

"Very well. That is all." The servant withdrew.

There was nothing unusual in the fact of Mrs. Tanner coming for dinner in the evening to the big house. Elsa simply could not eat all her meals alone, and her old friends at the village were constantly receiving invitations.

Mrs. Tanner arrived at half-past six. It was her first visit since the departure of the fleet several weeks before, and there was plenty to talk about. But Ma Tanner wisely reserved her conversation until after the meal, for the "vittles" of Mallaby House were famous the whole length of the New Brunswick coast.

Afterward when they had retired to Elsa's pink and gray boudoir, the eternal envy of Grande Mignon womanhood, the talk flowed freely.

"It's this way, Elsa," declared ma confidentially. "I think Nellie is pretty well took care of. Now young Nat Burns, as you know, is pretty well off, as the sayin' goes on the island. He really wouldn't have to fish if he didn't want to. His father didn't neglect *him* when his time come."

Ma Tanner did not see the change in Elsa's expression. The pupils of her magnificent black eyes expanded and the delicate brows drew together over the bridge of her nose. The close mouth, with its ugly set, would not have been recognized by any but lifelong friends.

"And Nat's about's good as any boy," went on ma. "Boys is turr'ble hard to fetch up so they don't disgrace ye and send ye to the grave with gray head bowed in sorrer, as the poet says. Nat ain't bad. He speaks sharp to his mother once in a while, but la — what boy don't? I think he'll treat Nellie right and be a good man to her."

"Ma," said Elsa, and her voice was quiet and intense as though she were keeping herself well in hand, "that's what *every one* thinks about Nat Burns."

"Wal," asked the elder woman, slightly resentful, "don't you think so?"

"What I think has nothing whatever to do with the question. But what I *know* might have. I don't want Nellie's life ruined, that's all."

"Look here, Elsa, what're you drivin' at?" Ma Turner was becoming wrought up. She knew there must be something behind these hints or Elsa would never venture on such thin ice with her.

"Ye be'n't by any means jealous o' Nellie, be ye?" she asked, peering through her spectacles.

"Heavens, no!" cried Elsa so convincingly that Mrs. Tanner was satisfied once and for all.

"Wal, what's all the fuss, then?"

"Any girl would ruin her life that threw herself away on Nat Burns. He's got a fine solid-gold case, but his works are very poor indeed, Ma Tanner."

"Don't go talkin' educated or I can't follow ye. D'ye mean he's all show an' nothin' in his mind or heart of Christian goodness?"

"Yes, I mean that, and I mean more besides. He doesn't stop by being merely 'not good.' He is actively and busily downright bad."

"They's several kinds of 'bad,' Elsa Mal-laby."

"Well, I mean the kind that makes a girl break her engagement and keep it broken, and that drives a man out of a decent village."

[There was a long and pregnant pause while Ma Tanner got everything straight in her mind.

"You don't mean that he has—" she inquired, her little mouth a thin, hard line.

"Yes, I do. Exactly that. I knew the case myself in this very village before Jim died. There are some men who instinctively take the correct course in a matter of that kind; others who don't care two pins as long as they get out of it with a whole skin. Nat Burns was that kind."

"Then you mean he ought already to be married?"

"Yes, or in jail."

"Why isn't he?"

"It was entirely up to the girl and she refused to act."

"Gawd! My poor Nellie!"

The servant knocked, and, upon receiving permission to enter, handed Elsa a telegram, evidently just delivered from the village telegraph office. Unconsciously the girl reached into a glass-covered book-case and drew forth a paper volume. Then she tore open the message and commenced to read it with the aid of the book.

Mrs. Tanner did not notice her. She sat staring into the future with a leaden heart. Such a thing as Elsa hinted at was unheard of in Freekirk Head, and she was overwhelmed. Suddenly she asked:

"Why do you hate Nat Burns so? You couldn't have told me that if you hadn't hated him."

Elsa looked up from her book impatiently, quite oblivious to the wound she had caused.

"Because I was very fond of that girl!" she said, and went back to the translation of the message. Suddenly she sprang to her feet with a little cry of dismay and rang the bell.

"Annette!" she cried. "Annette!" The maid rushed in, frightened, from the adjoining room.

"Tell Charles I am going to St. John's to-morrow, and to have the carriage at the door at half-past six. Pack my steamer trunk immediately. Great guns! Why isn't there a night boat?"

The maid flew out of the room, and Elsa, still doubtful, retranslated the message. Mrs. Tanner, taken aback by these sudden activities, rose hurriedly to go. This sudden flurry was inexplicable to her. Since the departure of the fleet Elsa had not as much as hinted leaving Freekirk Head. Now, in a moment, she was beside herself to go.

"I hope it isn't bad news, Elsa," she faltered.

"Well, it is, ma, it is, b-but only in a business way. A little trip will straighten it up, I think." And she was courteous but indefatigable in hastening the departure of her guest.

CHAPTER XXI

A PRISONER

WHEN Code Schofield came to himself his first sensation was one of oppression, such as is felt after sleeping in an unventilated room. It seemed difficult for him to breathe, but his body was quite free and uninjured, as he found by moving himself carefully in all directions before he even opened his eyes.

Presently the air became familiar. It was a perfect mixture of flavors; oilskins, stale tobacco-smoke, brine, burned grease, tar, and, as a back-ground, fish. His ears almost immediately detected water-noises running close by, and he could feel the pull of stout oak timber that formed the inner wall of where he lay.

"Fo'c'stle of a fishing schooner!" he announced, and then opened his eyes to prove that he was correct.

He looked out into a three-cornered room occupied by a three-cornered table, and that ran as far back as the foremast. Above, fastened to a huge square beam, hung a chain-lamp so swiveled that it

kept itself level however much the schooner kicked and wriggled. On the table, swinging his legs, sat a large, unpleasant-looking man.

"Wal, how are ye?" asked this latter, seeing his charge had recovered consciousness. Never having seen the man before, Code did not consider it necessary to answer. So he wriggled to find out if any bones were broken, and, in the end, discovered a tender knob on the right side of his head.

He soon recalled the visit to St. Pierre, the purchase of the bait, Pete Ellinwood's fight, the general mix-up, and the blow on the head that had finished him. He sat up suddenly.

"Look here! What ship is this?" he demanded.

"You'll find out soon enough when you go on deck. Hungry? I got orders to feed ye."

"You bet I'm hungry; didn't have any dinner last night in St. Pierre."

"Two nights ago," said the other, beginning to fry salt pork. "Nigh thirty-six hours you've laid here like a log." Code doubted it, but did not argue. He was trying to puzzle out the situation.

If this was a fishing schooner the men ought to be over the side fishing, and she would be at anchor. Instead, feeling the long, steady heel to leeward and half-recover to windward, he knew she was flying on a course.

Breakfast swallowed, he made his way on deck. As he came up the companionway a man stood leaning against the rail. With a feeling of violent revulsion, Code recognized Nat Burns. A glance at a near-by dory showed the lettering *Nettie B.*, and Schofield at once recognized his position.

He was Nat Burns's prisoner.

"Mornin'," said Burns curtly. "Thought you were goin' to sleep forever."

"It's a hanging offense putting any one to sleep that long," retorted Code cheerfully. "Luck was with you, and I woke up."

"You're hardly in a position to joke about hanging offenses," remarked Nat venomously.

"Why not?" Code had gone a sickly pallor that looked hideous through his tan.

"Because you're goin' home to St. Andrew's to be tried for one."

Code glanced over his left shoulder. The sun was there. The schooner was headed almost directly southwest. Nat had spoken the truth. They were headed homeward.

"Where's your warrant?" Code could feel his teeth getting on edge with rage as he talked to this captor who bore himself with such insolence.

"Don't need a warrant for murder cases, and I'm a constable at Freekirk Head, so everything is being done according to law. The gunboat didn't find

you, so I thought, as long as you were right to hand, I'd bring you along."

"Then you knew I was in St. Pierre?"

"Yes; saw you come in. If it hadn't been so dark you'd have recognized the *Nettie* not far away." Code, remembering the time of night they arrived, knew this to be impossible, for it is dark at six in September. He had barely been able to make out the lines of the nearest schooners.

A man was standing like a statue at the wheel, and, as he put the vessel over on the port tack, his face came brightly into the sun. It was 'Arry Duncan. Code had not been wrong, then, in thinking that he had seen the man's face in St. Pierre.

"Fine traitor you've got there at the wheel," said Schofield. "He'll do you brown some day."

"I don't think so. Just because he did you, doesn't prove anything. He was in my employ all the time, and getting real money for his work."

"So it was all a plot, eh?" said Code dejectedly. "I give you credit, Burns, for more brains than I ever supposed you had. What's become of Pete Ellinwood and the *Lass*?"

"Pete is back on the schooner and she's gone out to fish. You needn't worry about them. At the proper time they'll be told you are safe and unhurt."

Code said nothing for a while. With hands

rammed into his pockets he stood watching the white and blue sea whirl by. In those few minutes he touched the last depth of failure and despair. For a brief space he was minded to leap overboard.

He shivered as one with an ague and shook off the deadly influence of the idea. Had he no more grit? he asked himself. Had he come this far only to be beaten? Was this insolent young popinjay to win at last? *No!* Then he listened, for Nat was speaking.

"If you give your word of honor not to try and escape you can have the run of the decks and go anywhere you like on the schooner. If not, you will be locked up and go home a prisoner."

It was the last straw, the final piece of humiliation. Code stiffened as a soldier might to rebuke. A deadly, dull anger surged within him and took possession of his whole being — such an anger as can only come to one who, amiable and upright by nature, is driven to inevitable revolt.

"Look here, Burns," he said, his voice low, but intense with the emotion that mastered him, "I'll give no word of honor regarding anything. Between you and me there is a lot to be settled. You have almost ruined me, and, by Heaven, before I get through with you, you'll rue it!

"I shall make every attempt to escape from this schooner, and if I do escape, look out! If I do not

escape and you press these charges against me, I'll hunt you down for the rest of my life; or if I go to prison I will have others do it for me.

"Now you know what to expect, and you also know that when I say a thing I mean it. Now do what you like with me."

Burns looked at Schofield's tense white face. His eyes encountered those flaming blue ones and dropped sullenly. Whether it was the tremendous force of the threat or whether it was a guilty conscience working, no one but himself knew, but his face grew gradually as pallid as that of his captive. Suddenly he turned away.

"Boys," he called to the crew who were working near, "put Schofield in the old storeroom. And one of you watch it all the time. He says he will escape if he can, so I hold you responsible."

Code followed the men to a little shanty seemingly erected against the foremast. It was of stout, heavy boards about long enough to allow a cot being set up in it. It had formerly been used for storing provisions and had never been taken down.

When the padlock snapped behind him Code took in his surroundings. There were two windows in the little cubby, one looking forward and the other to starboard. Neither was large enough to provide a means of escape, he judged. At the foot of the cot was a plain wooden armchair, both pieces of fur-

niture being screwed to the floor. For exercise there was a strip of bare deck planking about six feet long beside the bed, where he might pace back and forth.

Both the cot and chair appeared to be new. "Had the room all ready for me," said Code to himself.

The one remaining piece of furniture was a queer kind of book-shelf nailed against the wall. It was fully five feet long and protruded a foot out above his bed. In its thirty-odd pigeonholes was jammed a collection of stuff that was evidently the accumulation of years. There were scores of cheap paper-bound novels concerning either high society or great detectives, old tobacco-boxes, broken pipes, string, wrapping-paper, and all the what-not of a general depository.

With hours on his hands and nothing whatever to occupy him, Code began to sort over the lurid literature with a view to his entertainment. He hauled a great dusty bundle out of one pigeonhole, and found among the novels some dusty exercise books.

He inspected them curiously. On the stiff board cover of one was scrawled, "Log Schooner *M. C. Burns*; *M. C. Burns*, master."

The novels were forgotten with the appearance of this old relic. The *M. C. Burns* was the original

Burns schooner when Nat's father was still in the fish business at Freekirk Head. It was the direct predecessor of the *Nettie B.*, which was entirely Nat's. On the death of the elder Burns when the *May Schofield* went down, the *M. C. Burns* had been sold to realize immediate cash. And here was her log!

Code looked over pages that were redolent of the events in his boyhood, for Michael was a ready writer and made notes regularly even when the *M. C.* was not on a voyage. He had spent an hour in this way when he came to this entry on one of the very last pages:

"June 30: This day clear with strong E. S.-E. wind. This day Nat, in the *M. C. Burns*, raced Code Schofield in the *May Schofield* from Quoddy Head to moorings in Freekirk Head harbor. My boy had the worst of it all the way. I never saw such luck as that young Schofield devil has. He won by half an hour. Poor Nat is heartbroken and swore something awful. He says he'll win next time or know why!"

"Just like old man Burns!" thought Code. "Pities and spoils his rascal of a son. But the boy loved him."

Code had not thought of that race in years. How well he remembered it now! There had been money up on both sides, and the rules were that no

one in either schooner should be over twenty except the skippers.

What satisfaction it had been to give Nat a good trimming in the fifty-year-old *May*. He could still feel an echo of the old proud thrill. He turned back to the log.

"July 1: Cloudy this day. Hot. Light S.-W. breeze. Nat tells me another race will be sailed in just a week. Swears he will win it. Poor boy, what with losing yesterday and Caroline Fuller's leaving the Head to work in Lubec, he is hardly himself. I'm afraid the old *M. C.* won't show much speed till she is thoroughly overhauled. Note—Stmr. *May Schofield's* policy runs out July 20th. See about this, sure."

There was very little pertaining to the next race until the entry for June 6, two days before the event. Then he read:

"Nat is quite happy; says he can't lose day after to-morrow. I told him he must have fitted the *M. C.* with wings, but he only grinned. Take the stmr. to St. John to-morrow to look after policies, including *May Schofield's*. She's so old her rates will have to go up. Won't be back till day after the race, but Nat says he'll telegraph me. Wonder what business that boy's got up his sleeve that makes him so sure he will win? Oh, he's a clever one, that boy!"

Here the chronicle ended. Little did Michael Burns know he would never write in it again. He went to St. John's, as he had said, and completed his business in time to return home the day of the race instead of the day after.

The second race was never sailed, for Code Schofield received a telegram from St. John's, offering him a big price for a quick lightering trip to Grande Mig-non, St. John being accidentally out of schooners and the trip urgent.

Though loath to lose the race by default, the money offered was too good to pass by, and Code had made the trip and loaded up by nightfall. It was then that he had met Michael Burns, and Burns had expressed his desire to go home in the *May* so as to watch her actions in a moderate sea and gale.

Neither he nor the *May* ever saw dry land again. Only Code of the whole ship's company struggled ashore on the Wolves, bruised and half dead from exposure.

The end of the old log before him was full of poignant tragedy to Code, the tragedy of his own life, for it was the unwritten pages from then on that should have told the story of a fiendishly planned revenge upon him who was totally innocent of any wrong-doing. The easy, weak, indulgence of the father had grown a crop of vicious and cruel deeds in the son.

CHAPTER XXII

A RECOVERED TREASURE

FOR five days Code yawned or rushed through the greater part of Nat's stock of lurid literature. It was the one thing that kept him from falling into the black pit of brooding; sometimes he felt as though he must go insane if he allowed himself to think. He had not the courage to tear aside the veil of dull pain that covered his heart and look at the bleeding reality. He was afraid of his own emotions.

It was impossible for him to go lower in the scale of physical events.

Nat was about to triumph, and Code himself was forced to admit that this triumph was mostly due to Nat's own wits. First he had stolen Nellie Tanner (Code had thought a lot about that ring missing from Nellie's hand), then he had attached the *Charming Lass* in the endeavor to take away from him the very means of his livelihood.

Then something had happened. Schofield did not know what it was, but something evidently very serious, for the next thing he knew Nat had crushed

his pride and manhood under a brutal and technical charge of murder.

But this was not all.

His victim escaping him with the schooner and the means of livelihood, Burns had employed a traitor in the crew to poison the bait and force him to come ashore to replenish his tubs. Once ashore, the shanghaiing was not difficult.

Code had no doubt whatever that the whole plan, commencing with the disappearance of the man in the motor-dory and ending with his abduction from St. Pierre, was part and parcel of the same scheme. In this, his crowning achievement of skill and cunning, Burns had showed himself an admirable plotter, playing upon human nature as he did to effect his ends.

For it was nothing but a realization of Peter Ellinwood's weakness in the matter of his size and fighting ability that resulted in his (Code's) easy capture. Schofield had no shadow of a doubt but that the big Frenchman had been hired to play his part, and that, in the howling throng that surrounded the fighters the crew of the *Nettie B.* were waiting to seize the first opportunity to make the duel a *mêlée* and effect their design in the confusion.

Their opportunity came when the Frenchman tried to trip Pete Ellinwood after big Jean had fallen and Code rushed into the fray with the feroc-

ity of a wildcat. Some one raised the yell "Police," he was surrounded by his enemies, some one rapped him over the head with a black-jack, and the job was done. It was clever business, and despite the helplessness of his position, Code could not but admire the brilliance of such a scheming brain, while at the same time deploring that it was not employed in some legitimate and profitable cause.

Now he was in the enemy's hands, and St. Andrew's was less than a dozen hours away; St. Andrew's, with its jail, its grand jury, and its pen.

Life aboard the *Nettie B.* had been a dead monotony. On the foremast above Code's prison hung the bell that rang the watches, so that the passage of every half hour was dinged into his ears. Three times a day he was given food, and twice a day he was allowed to pace up and down the deck, a man holding tightly to each arm.

The weather had been propitious, with a moderate sea and a good quartering wind. The *Nettie* had footed it properly, and Code's experienced eye had, on one occasion, seen her log her twelve knots in an hour. The fact had raised his estimation of her fifty per cent.

It must not be supposed that, as Code sat in his hard wooden chair, he forgot the diary that he had read the first afternoon of his incarceration. Often he thought of it, and often he drew it out from its

place and reread those last entries: "Swears he will win second race," "Says he can't lose day after to-morrow," "I wonder what the boy has got up his sleeve that makes him so sure he will win?"

At first Code merely ascribed these recorded sayings of Nat Burns to youthful disappointment and a sportsmanlike determination to do better next time. But not for long. He remembered as though it had been yesterday the look with which Nat had favored him when he finally came ashore beaten, and the sullen resentment with which he greeted any remarks concerning the race.

There was no sportsmanlike determination about him! Code quickly changed his point of view. How could Nat be so sure he was going to win?

The thing was ridiculous on the face of it. The fifty-year-old *May* had limped in half an hour ahead of the thirty-year-old *M. C. Burns* after a race of fifteen miles. How, then, could Nat swear with any degree of certainty that he would win the second time. It was well known that the *M. C. Burns* was especially good in heavy weather, but how could Nat ordain that there would be just the wind and sea he wanted?

The thing was absurd on the face of it, and, besides, silly braggadocio, if not actually malicious. And even if it were malicious, Code thanked Heaven that the race had not been sailed, and that he had

been spared the exhibition of Nat's malice. He had escaped that much, anyway.

However, from motives of general caution, Code decided to take the book with him. Nat had evidently forgotten it, and he felt sure he would get off the ship with it in his possession. Now, as he drew near to St. Andrews, he put it for the last time inside the lining of his coat, and fastened that lining together with pins, of which he always carried a stock under his coat-lapel.

As Schofield had not forgotten the old log of the *M. C. Burns*, neither had he forgotten the threat he made to Nat that he would try his best to escape, and would defy his authority at every turn.

He had tried to fulfil his promise to the letter. Twice he had removed one of the windows before the alert guard detected him, and once he had nearly succeeded in cutting his way through the two-inch planking of his ceiling before the chips and sawdust were discovered, and he was deprived of his clasp-knife.

Every hour of every day his mind had been constantly on this business of escape. Even during the reading, to which he fled to protect his reason, it was the motive of every chapter, and he would drop off in the middle of a page into a reverie, and grow inwardly excited over some wild plan that mapped itself out completely in his feverish brain.

Now as they approached St. Andrew's his determination was as strong as ever, but his resources were exhausted. Double-guarded and without weapons, he found himself helpless. The fevered excitement of the past four days had subsided into a dull apathy of hurt in which his brain was as delicate and alert as the mainspring of a watch. He was resigned to the worst if it came, but was ready, like a panther in a tree, to spring at the slightest false move of his enemies.

Now for the last time he went over his little eight-by-ten prison. He examined the chair as though it were some instrument of the Inquisition. He pulled the bed to pieces and handled every inch of the frame. He emptied every compartment of the queer hanging cabinet that had been stuffed with books and miscellanies; he examined every article in the room.

He had done this a dozen times before, but some instinct drove him to repeat the process. There was always hope of the undiscovered, and, besides, he needed the physical action and the close application of his mind. So, mechanically and doggedly he went over every inch of his little prison.

But in vain.

The roof and walls were of heavy planking and were old. They were full of nicks as well as wood-knots, and the appearance of some of the

former gave Code an idea. He went carefully over the boards, sticking his thumb-nail into them and lifting or pressing down as the shape of the nick warranted. For they resembled very much the depressions cut in sliding covers on starch-boxes whereby such covers can be pushed in their grooves.

At any other time he would have considered this the occupation of a madman, but now it kept him occupied and held forth the faint gleam of hope by which he now lived.

Suddenly something happened. He was lying across his immovable cot fingering the boards low down in the right rear corner when he felt something give beneath his thumb. A flash of hope almost stifled him, and he lay quiet for a moment to regain command of himself. Then he put his thumb again in the niche and lifted up. With all his strength he lifted and, all at once, a panel rushed up and stuck, revealing a little box perhaps a foot square that had been built back from the rear wall of the old storeroom.

That was all, except for the fact that something was in the box — a package done up in paper.

For a while he did not investigate the package, but devoted his attention to sounding the rest of the near-by planks with the hope that they might give into a larger opening and furnish a means of egress. For half an hour he worked and then gave up. He

had covered every inch of wall and every niche, and this was all!

At last he turned to the contents of the box that he had uncovered. Removing the package, he slid the cover down over the opening for fear that his guard, looking in a window, might become aware of what he had discovered. Then, sitting on the bed, he unwrapped the package.

It was a beautiful, clear mirror bound with silver nickel and fitted with screw attachments as though it were intended to be fastened to something.

At first this unusual discovery meant nothing whatever to him. Then, as he turned the object listlessly in his hands, his eyes fell upon three engraved letters, C. A. S., and a date, 1908.

Then he remembered.

When he was twenty years old his father had taught him the science of navigation, so that if anything happened Code might sail the old *May Schofield*.

Because of the fact that a position at sea was found by observing the heavenly bodies, Code had become interested in astronomy, and had learned to chart them on a sky map of his own.

The object in his hand was an artificial horizon, a mirror attached to the sextant which could be fixed at the exact angle of the horizon should the real horizon be obscured. This valuable instrument his

father had given him on his twenty-first birthday because the old man had been vastly pleased with his interest in a science of which he himself knew little or nothing.

Code remembered that, for a year or two, he had pursued this hobby of his with deep interest and considerable success, and that his great object in life had been to some day have a small telescope of his own by which to learn more of the secrets of the heavens. But, after his father died, he had been forced to take up the active support of the family, and had let this passion die.

But how did it happen that the mirror was here?

He recalled that the rest of his paraphernalia had gone to the bottom with the *May Schofield*. It was true that he had not overhauled his equipment for some time, and that it had been in a drawer in the *May's* cabin, but that drawer had not been opened.

He pursued the train of thought no farther. His brain was tired and his head ached with the strain of the last five days. His last hope of escape had only resulted in his finding a forgotten mirror, and his despair shut out any other consideration. He had not even the fire to resent the fact that it was in Burns's possession, and concealed.

It was his, he knew, and, without further thought of it, he thrust it into his pocket just as he heard the

men outside his little prison talking together excitedly.

"By George, she looks like a gunboat," said one. "I wonder what she wants?"

"Yes, there's her colors. You can see the sun shinin' on her brass guns forward."

"There, she's signalin'. I wonder what she wants?"

Code walked idly to his windows and peered out, but could not see the vessel that the men were talking about.

"She wants us to heave to, boys," sang out Nat suddenly. "Stand by to bring her up into the wind. Hard down with your wheel, John!"

As the schooner's head veered Code caught a glimpse of a schooner-rigged vessel half a mile away with uniformed men on her decks and two gleaming brass cannon forward. Then she passed out of vision.

"She's sending a cutter aboard," said one man.

CHAPTER XXIII

SURPRISES

FIFTEEN minutes later a small boat, rowed smartly by six sailors in white canvas, came alongside the 'midships ladder of the *Nettie B.* At a word from the officer the six oars rose as one vertically into the air, and the bowman staved off the cutter so that she brought up without a scratch.

A young man in dark blue sprang out of the stern-sheets upon the deck.

"*Nettie B.* of Freekirk Head?" he asked.
"Captain Burns commanding?"

"Yes," said Nat, stepping forward, "I am Captain Burns. What do you want?"

"I come from the gunboat *Albatross*," said the officer, "and represent Captain Foraker. You have on board, have you not, a man named Code Schofield, also of Freekirk Head, under arrest for the murder of a man or men on the occasion of the sinking of his schooner?"

Nat scowled.

"Yes," he said. "I arrested him myself in St.

Pierre, Miquelon. I am a constable in Freekirk Head."

"Just as we understood," remarked the officer blandly. "Captain Foraker desires me to thank you for your prompt and efficient work in this matter, though I can tell you on the side, Captain Burns, that the old man is rather put out that he didn't get the fellow himself. We chased up and down the Banks looking for him, but never got within sight of as much as his main truck sticking over the horizon.

"And the *Petrel* — that's our steamer, you know — well, sir, maybe he didn't make a fool of her. Payson, on the *Petrel*, is the ugliest man in the service, and when this fellow Schofield led him a chase of a hundred and fifty miles, and then got away among the islands of Placentia Bay, they say Payson nearly had apoplexy. So your getting him ought to be quite a feather in your cap."

"I consider that I did my duty. But would you mind telling me what you have signaled me for?" Burns resented the gossip of this young whipper-snapper of the service who seemed, despite his frankness, to have something of a patronizing air.

"Certainly. Captain Foraker desires me to tell you that he wished the prisoner transferred to the *Albatross*. We know that you are not provided with an absolutely secure place to keep the prisoner,

and, as we are on our way to St. Andrews on another matter, the skipper thinks he might just as well take the fellow in and hand him over to the authorities."

"Well, I don't agree with your skipper," snapped Burns. "I got Schofield, and I'm going to deliver him. He's safe enough, don't you worry. When you go back you can tell Captain Foraker that Schofield is in perfectly good hands."

The pleasant, amiable manner of the subaltern underwent a quick change. He at once became the stern, businesslike representative of the government.

"I am sorry, Captain Burns, but I shall deliver no such message, and when I go back I shall have the criminal with me. Those are my orders, and I intend to carry them out." He turned to the six sailors sitting quietly in the boat, their oars still in the air.

"Unship oars!" he commanded. The sweeps fell away, three on each side. "Squad on deck!" The men scrambled up the short ladder and lined up in two rows of three. At his belt each man carried a revolver and cutlasses swung at their sides.

"Now," requested the officer amiably, "will you please lead me to the prisoner?"

Nat's face darkened into a scowl of black rage, and he cursed under his breath. It was just his luck,

he told himself, that when he was about to triumph, some of these government loafers should come along and take the credit out of his hands.

For a moment he thought of resistance. All his crew were on deck, drawn by curiosity. But he saw they were vastly impressed by the discipline of the visitors and by their decidedly warlike appearance. If he resisted there would be blood spilt, and he did not like the thought of that. He finally admitted to himself that the young officer was only carrying out orders, and orders that were absolutely just.

"Well, come along!" he snarled ungraciously, and started forward. The officer spoke a word of command, and the squad marched after him as he, in turn, followed Nat.

Of all this Code had been ignorant, for the conversation had taken place too far aft for him to hear. His first warning was when the sailors marched past the window and Nat reluctantly opened the door of the old storeroom.

"Officers are here to get you, Schofield," said the skipper of the *Nettie B.* "Come out."

Wonderingly, Code stepped into the sunlight and open air and saw the officer with his escort. With the resignation that he had summoned during his five days of imprisonment he accepted his fate.

"I am ready," he said. "Let's go as soon as possible."

"Captain Schofield," said the subaltern, "you are to be transferred, and I trust you will deem it advisable to go peaceably."

Catching sight of the six armed sailors, Code could not help grinning.

"There's no question about it," he said; "I will."

"Form cordon!" ordered the officer, and the sailors surrounded him — two before, two beside, and two behind. In this order they marched to the cutter.

Code was told to get in first and take a seat looking aft. He did so, and the officer dropped into the stern-sheets so as to face his prisoner. The sailors took their position, shipped their oars smartly, and the cutter was soon under way to the gunboat.

Arrived at the accommodation ladder, and on deck, Code found a vessel with white decks, glistening brass work, and discipline that shamed naval authority. The subaltern, saluting, reported to the deck-officer that his mission had been completed, and the latter, after questioning Code, ordered that he be taken to confinement quarters.

These quarters, unlike the pen on the *Nettie B.*, were below the deck, but were lighted by a porthole.

The room was larger, had a comfortable bunk, a small table loaded with magazines, a chair, and a sanitary porcelain washstand. The luxury of the appointments was a revelation.

There was no question of his escaping from this room he very soon discovered.

The door was of heavy oak and locked on the outside. The walls were of solid, smooth timber, and the porthole was too small to admit the possibility of his escaping through it. The roof was formed of the deck planks.

He had hardly examined his surroundings when he heard a voice in sharp command on deck, and the running of feet, creaking of blocks, and straining of sheets as sail was got on the vessel. His room presently took an acute angle to starboard, and he realized that, with the fair gale on the quarter, they must be crowding her with canvas.

He could tell by the look of the water as it flew past his port that the remainder of the trip to St. Andrews would not take long. He knew the course there from his present position must be north, a little west, across the Bay of Fundy.

The *Nettie B.*, when compelled to surrender her prisoner, had rounded Nova Scotia and was on the home-stretch toward Quoddy Roads. She was, in fact, less than thirty miles away from Grande Mignon Island, and Code had thought with a great and

bitter homesickness of the joy just a sight of her would be.

He longed for the white Swallow-tail lighthouse with its tin swallow above; for the tumbled green-clothed granite of the harbor approaches; for the black, sharp-toothed reefs that showed on the half-water near the can-buoy, and for the procession of stately headlands to north and south, fading from sight in a mantle of purple and gray.

But most of all for the crescent of stony beach, the nestle of white cottages along the King's Road, and the green background of the mountain beyond, with Mallaby House in the very heart of it.

This had been his train of thought when Burns had opened the door to deliver him up to the gun-boat, and now it returned to him as the stanch vessel under him winged her way across the blue afternoon sea.

He wondered if the *Albatross* would pass close enough inshore for him to get a glimpse of Mignon's tall and forbidding fog-wreathed headlands. Just a moment of this familiar sight would be balm to his bruised spirit. He felt that he could gather strength from the sight of home. He had been among aliens so long!

But no nearer than just a glimpse. He made a firm resolution never to push the prow of the *Lass* into Flagg Cove until he stood clear of the charges

against him. He admitted that it might take years, but his resolution was none the less strong.

His place of confinement was on the starboard side of the *Albatross*, and he was gratified after a few minutes to see the sun pouring through his port-hole.

Despair had left him now, and he was quietly cheerful. With something akin to pleasure that the struggle was over, and that events were out of his hands for the time being, he settled down in his chair and picked up a magazine.

He had hardly opened it when a thought occurred to him. If the course was north a little west, how did it happen that the sun streamed into his room, which was on the east side of the ship on that course?

He sprang to the port and looked out.

The sun smote him full in the face. He strained his eyes against the horizon that was unusually clear for this foggy sea, and would have sworn that along its edge was a dark line of land. The conclusion was inevitable.

The *Albatross* was flying directly south as fast as her whole spread of canvas could take her.

Schofield could not explain this phenomenon to himself, nor did he try. The orders that a man-of-war sailed under were none of his affair, and if the captain chose to institute a hunt for the north pole

before delivering a prisoner in port, naturally he had a perfect right to do so. It was possible, Code told himself, that another miserable wretch was to be picked up before they were both landed together.

Whatever course Captain Foraker intended to lay in the future his present one was taking him as far as possible away from Grande Mignon, St. Andrew's, and St. John's. And for this meager comfort Code Schofield was thankful.

The sun remained above the horizon until six o'clock, and then suddenly plumped into the sea. The early September darkness rushed down and, as it did so, a big Tungsten light in the ceiling of Code's room sprang into a brilliant glow, the iron cover to the port-hole being shut at the same instant.

A few moments later the door of his cell was unceremoniously opened and a man entered bearing an armful of fresh clothing.

"Captain Schofield," he said, with the deference of a servant, "the captain wishes your presence at dinner. The ship's barber will be here presently. Etiquette provides that you wear these clothes. I will fix them and lay them out for you. If you care for a bath, sir, I will draw it —"

"Say, look here," exclaimed our hero with a sudden and unexpected touch of asperity, "if you're

trying to kid me, old side-whiskers, you're due for the licking of your life."

He got deliberately upon his feet and removed the fishing-coat which he had worn uninterruptedly since the night at St. Pierre.

"I thought I'd read about you in that magazine or something, and had fallen asleep, but here you are still in the room. I'm going to see whether you're alive or not. No one can mention a bath to me with impunity."

He made a sudden grab for the servant, who stood with mouth open, uncertain as to whether or not he was dealing with a lunatic.

Before he could move, Code's hard, strong hands closed upon his arms in a grip that brought a bellow of pain. In deadly fear of his life, he babbled protests, apologies, and pleadings in an incoherent medley that would have satisfied the most toughened skeptic. Code released him, laughing.

"Well, I guess you're real, all right," he said. "Now if you're in earnest about all this, draw that bath *quick*. Then I'll believe you."

Half an hour later Code, bathed, shaved, and feeling like a different man, was luxuriating in fresh linen and a comfortable suit.

"Look here, Martin," he said to the valet, "of course I know that this is no more the gunboat *Albatross* than I am. The Canadian government

isn't in the habit of treating prisoners in exactly this manner. What boat is this?"

Martin coughed a little before answering. In all his experience he had never before been asked to dress the skipper of a fishing vessel.

"I was told to say, sir, in case you asked, that you are aboard the mystery schooner, sir."

"What! The mystery schooner that led the steamer that chase?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, by the great trawl hook! And I didn't know it!"

"No, sir. Remember we came up behind the *Nettie B.*, and when you were transferred you were made to sit facing away from this ship so you would not recognize her."

"Then all the guns were fakes, and the whole business of a man-of-war as well?" cried Code, astonished almost out of his wits by this latest development in his fortunes.

"Yes, sir. The appearances were false, but as for seamanship, sir, this vessel could not do what she does were it not for the strict training aboard her, sir. I'll wager our lads can out-manuever and outsail any schooner of her tonnage on the seas, Gloucestermen included. The navy is easy compared to our discipline."

"But what holds the men to it if it's so hard?"

"Double wages and loyalty to the captain."

"Captain Foraker?"

"Yes, sir. There, sir, that tie is beautiful. Now the waistcoat and coat. If you will permit me, sir, you look, as I might say, 'andsome, begging your pardon."

Code flushed and looked into the glass that hung against the wall of his cabin. He barely recognized the clean-shaven, clear-eyed, broad shouldered youth he saw there as the rough, salty skipper of the schooner *Charming Lass*. He wondered with a chuckle what Pete Ellinwood would say if he could see him.

"And now, sir, if you're ready, just come with me, sir. Dinner is at seven, and it is now a quarter to the hour."

Stunned by the wonders already experienced, and vaguely hoping that the dream would last forever, Code followed the bewhiskered valet down a narrow passage carpeted with a stuff so thick that it permitted no sound.

Martin passed several doors — the passage was lighted by small electrics — and finally paused before one on the right-hand side. Here he knocked, and apparently receiving an answer, peered into the room for a moment. Withdrawing his head, he swung the door open and turned to Schofield.

"Go right in, sir," he said, and Code, eager for new wonders, stepped past him.

The room was a small sitting-room, lighted softly by inverted bowl-shaped globes of glass so colored as to bring out the full value of the pink velours and satin brocades with which the room was hung and the furniture covered.

For a moment he stared without seeing anything, and then a slight rustling in a far corner diverted his attention. He looked sharply and saw a woman rise from a lounge and come toward him with outstretched hands.

She was Elsa Mallaby!

CHAPTER XXIV

THE SIREN

HE saw the glad smile on her lips, the light in her great, lustrous, dark eyes, and the beauty of her faultless body, and yet they all faded to nothing beside the astounding and inexplicable fact that she was in the mystery schooner.

"You here!" he gasped, taking her hands in his big rough ones and gripping them tight. The impulse to draw her to him in an embrace was almost irresistible, for not only was she lovely in the extreme, but she was from Freekirk Head and home, and his soul had been starved with loneliness and the ceaseless repetition of his own thoughts.

"Yes," she replied in her gentle voice, "I am here. You are surprised?"

"That hardly expresses it," he returned. "So many things have happened to-day that I expect anything now."

"Come, let us go in," she said, and led him through a doorway that connected with an adjoining room. In the center of it was a small table laid with linen and furnished with glittering silver and glass. "Are you hungry?" she asked.

"You know fishermen well enough not to ask that," he laughed, and they sat down. Elsa did not make any tax upon his conversational powers. It was Code himself who first put a pertinent question.

"I take for granted your being here and your living like this," he said; "but I am bursting with curiosity. How do you happen to be in this schooner?"

"It is my schooner; why shouldn't I be in it?" she smiled.

"Yours?" He was mystified. "But why should you have a vessel like this? You never used one before that I know of."

"True, Code; but I have always loved the sea, and—it amuses me. You remember that sometimes I have been away from Freekirk Head for a month at a time. I have been cruising in this schooner. Once I went nearly as far as Iceland; but that took longer. A woman in my position must do something. I *can't* sit up in that great big house alone all the time."

The intensity with which she said this put a decidedly new face on the matter. It was just like her to be lonely without Jim, he thought. Naturally a woman with all her money must do something.

"But, Elsa," he protested, "your having the schooner for your own use is all right enough; but

why has it always turned up to help me when I needed help most? Really, if I had all the money in the world I could never repay the obligations that you have put me under this summer."

"I don't want you to repay me," she said quietly. "Just the fact that I have helped you and that you appreciate it is enough to make me happy."

He looked steadily into her brown eyes for a few moments. Then her gaze dropped and a dull flush mounted from her neck until it suffused her face.

He had never seen her look so beautiful. The wealth of her black hair was coiled about the top of her head like a crown, and held in its depths a silver butterfly.

Her gown was Quaker gray in color, and of some soft clinging material that enhanced the lines of her figure. It was an evening gown, and cut just low enough to be at the same time modest and beautiful. Code, without knowing why, admired her taste and told himself that she erred in no particular. Her mode of life was, at the same time, elegant and feminine — exactly suited her.

"You are easily made happy," he remarked, referring to her last sentence.

"No, I'm not," she contradicted him seriously. "I am the hardest woman in the world to make happy."

"And helping me does it?"

"Yes."

"You are a good woman," he said gratefully, "and always seem to be doing for others. No one will ever forget how you offered to stand by the women of Grande Mignon while the men went fishing."

Again Elsa blushed, but this time the color came from a different source. Little did he know that her philanthropy was all a part of the same plan — to win his favor.

"And the things I know you must have done for my mother," he went on. "Those are the things that I appreciate more than any. It is not every woman who would even think of them, let alone do them."

Why would he force her into this attitude of perpetual lying? she thought. It was becoming worse and worse. Why was he so straightforward and so blind? Could he not see that she loved him? Was he one of those cold and passionless men upon whom no woman ever exerts an intense influence?

Though she did not know it, she expressed the whole fault in her system. A man reared in a more complex community than a fishing village would have divined her scheme, and the result would have been a prolonged but most delightful duel of wits and hearts.

But Code, by the very directness of his honesty.

and simplicity of his nature, cut through the gauzy wrappings of this delectable package and went straight to its heart. And there he found nothing, because what little of the deeply genuine there lay in this woman's restless nature was disguised and shifted at the will of her caprice.

When Code had experienced the pleasure of lighting a genuine clear Havana cigar after many months of abstinence, she leaned across the table to him, her hands clasped before her.

"Code, what does loneliness represent to you?" she asked.

"Oh, I don't know," he temporized, taken aback. "I don't go in for loneliness much; but when I do, why all I want is — well, let me see, a good game of quoits with the boys in front of the church, or a talk with my mother about how rich we are going to be some day when I get that partnership in the fishstand. I'm too busy to be lonely."

"And I'm too lonely to be busy!" He looked at her unbelievably.

"You!" he cried. "Why, you have everything in the world; you can go anywhere, do anything, have the people about you that you want. You, lonely? I don't understand you."

"Well, I'll put it another way. Did you ever want something so hard that it hurt, and couldn't get it?"

"Yes, I wanted my father back after he died," said Code simply.

"And I wanted Jim after he died," added Elsa. "Those things are bad enough; but one gets used to them. What I mean especially is something we see about us all the time and have no chance of getting. Did you ever want something like that, so that it nearly killed you, and couldn't get it?"

Code was silent. The one rankling hurt of his whole life, after seemingly being healed, broke out afresh — the engagement of Nat Burns and Nellie Tanner.

He suddenly realized that, since seeing Elsa, he had not as much as remembered Nellie's existence, when usually her mental presence was not far from him. Elsa, with all her luxury and alluring feminine charms, seemed to cast a spell that bound him helpless like the music in the fairy stories. He liked the spell, and, after all she had done, he confessed to an extraordinary feeling for the enchantress.

Now had come the memory of Nellie — dear, frank-eyed, open-hearted Nellie Tanner — and the thought that her fresh wholesomeness was pledged to make glad the life of Nat Burns seared his heart. A cloud settled down on his brow. But in a moment he recalled himself. His hostess had asked him a question; he must answer it.

"Yes, I have wanted something — and couldn't get it."

"Yes," said Elsa slowly, "a thing is bad enough; but it seems to me that the most hopeless thing in the world is to want a person in that way." Her voice was dreamy and retrospective. Its peculiar, vibrant timbre thrilled him with the thought that perhaps there was some hidden tragedy in her life that he had never suspected. Any unpleasant sense that she was curious was overcome by the manner in which she spoke.

"Yes, it is," he answered solemnly.

She looked up in astonishment at the sincerity of his tone, her heart tingling with a new emotion of delicious uncertainty. What if, after all, he had wanted some one in the way she wanted him? What if the some one were herself and he had been afraid to aspire to a woman of her wealth and position? She asked this without any feeling of conceit, for one who loves always dreams he sees signs of favor in the one beloved.

"Then you have wanted some one?" All her manner, her voice, her eyes expressed sympathy. She was the soul of tact and no mean actress at the same time.

Code, still in the depth of reminiscence and averted happiness, scarcely heard her, but he answered:

"Yes, I have." Then, coming to full realization of the confession, he colored and laughed uneasily. "But let's not talk of such personal things any more," he added. "You must think me very foolish to be mooning about like this."

"Can I help you?" she asked, half suffocated by the question. "Perhaps there might be something I could do that would bring the one you want to you."

It was the crucial point in the conversation. She held her breath as she awaited his answer. She knew he was no adept at the half-meanings and near-confessions of flirtation, and that she could depend upon his words and actions to be genuine.

He looked at her calmly without the additional beat of a pulse. His color had died down and left him pale. He was considering.

"You have done much for me," he said at last, "and I shall never forget it, but in this matter even *you* could not help me. Only the Almighty could do it by direct intervention, and I don't believe He works that way in this century," Code smiled faintly.

As for Elsa, she felt the grip as of an icy hand upon her heart. It was some one else that he meant. Was it possible that all her carefully planned campaign had come to this miserable failure? Had she come this far only to lose all?

The expression of her features did not change, and she sought desperately to control her emotion, but she could not prevent two great tears from welling up in her eyes and slowly rolling down her cheeks.

Code sat startled and nonplused. Only once before in his life had he seen a woman cry, and that was when Nellie broke down in his mother's house after the fire. But the cause for that was evident, and the very fact of her tears had been a relief to him. Now, apparently without rime or reason, Elsa Mallaby was weeping.

The sight went to his heart as might the scream of a child in pain. He wondered with a panicky feeling whether he had hurt her in any way.

"I say, Elsa," he cried, "what's the matter? Don't do that. If I've done anything—" He was on his feet and around the little table in an instant. He took her left hand in his left and put his right on her shoulder, speaking to her in broken, incoherent sentences.

But his words, gentle and almost endearing, emphasized the feeling of miserable self-pity that had taken hold of her and she suddenly sobbed aloud.

"Elsa, dear," he cried, beside himself with uncertainty, "what is it? Tell me. You've done so much for me, please let me do something for you if I can."

"You can't, Code," she said, "unless it's in your heart," and then she bowed her beautiful head forward upon her bare arms and wept. After awhile the storm passed and she leaned back.

He kissed her suddenly. Then he abruptly turned to the door and went out.

Schofield had suddenly come to his senses and disengaged himself from Elsa's embrace.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE GUILT FIXED

IT was the following afternoon before Code Schofield ventured on deck.

When he did so it was to find that all naval uniforms had been laid aside, the imitation brass guns forward had been removed, and the schooner so altered that she would scarcely have been recognized as the *Albatross*.

The wireless had been erected again, and now the apparatus was spitting forth an almost constant series of messages. The crew, spotless in dungarees and without a vestige of a weapon, maneuvered the schooner as Code had never in his life seen a vessel handled. At a word from the officer of the watch they jumped as one man. Every order was executed on the run, and all sails were swayed as flat and taut as boards.

Code found Elsa ensconced with a book under the awning amidships. Big, comfortable wicker chairs were about and the deck so lately cleared for action had an almost homelike look.

"Did you sleep well?" asked the girl with an entire lack of self-consciousness, as though the episode

of the night before had never occurred. Code was very thankful for her tact and much relieved. It was evident that their relations for the remainder of the four days' journey north were to be impersonal unless he chose to make them otherwise. This he had no intention of doing — after his morning's battle with himself.

"Like a top, when I got started," he replied. "And you?"

"Splendidly, thanks. And you should have seen the breakfast I ate. I am a shameful gourmand when I am at sea."

He took a chair and filled his pipe.

"By the way, how long have you been out on this cruise? You weren't aboard, were you, the time the mystery-schooner led the revenue steamer such a chase?"

"No," she replied, "but I wish I had been. I nearly died when I heard about that; it was so funny. I have only been aboard about four days. I'll tell you the history of it.

"I was having a very delightful dinner up at Mallaby House with Mrs. Tanner, Nellie's mother, you know"—she looked unconcernedly out to sea—"when I got a message, part wireless and part telegram, saying that Nat Burns had nabbed you in St. Pierre and was racing with you to St. Andrew's.

"Well, I've sworn all along that you shouldn't come to any harm through him, so I just left Free-kirk Head the next morning on the steamer, took a train to Halifax, and had the schooner pick me up there. Off Halifax they told me that the *Nettie B.* was six hours ahead of us and going hard, so we had to wing it out for all there was in this one. I had provided all the naval fixings before, realizing that we would probably have to use them some time, and that's all there is to it."

"Well, Elsa, I'll say this — that I don't believe that there was ever a schooner built that could out-game and outsail this one. She's a wonder!"

For a while they talked of trite and inconsequential things. It was very necessary that they become firmly grounded on their new footing of genuine friendship before departing into personalities; and so, for two days, they avoided any but the most casual topics.

As the weather was exceptionally warm, with a spicy salt breeze that seemed to bear the very germ of life in its midst, they had breakfast and luncheon on deck, dining below in the rosy little dining-room.

Thirty-six hours before they expected to catch the fishing fleet (it had been maneuvered so that Code should be restored to the *Charming Lass* after dark), Elsa opened the subject of Code's trouble with Nat Burns. It was morning, and his recent

days of ease and mental refreshment had made him see things clearly that had before been obscured by the great strain under which he labored.

Code told her the whole thing from beginning to end, leaving out only that part of Nat's cumulative scheme that had to do with Nellie Tanner. He showed Elsa how his enemy had left no stone unturned to bring him back home a pauper, a criminal, and one who could never again lift his head among his own people even though he escaped years in prison.

It was a brief and simple story, but he could see Elsa's face change as emotions swept over it. Her remarks were few, but he suddenly became aware that she was harboring a great and lasting hatred against Nat. He did not flatter himself that it was on his own account, nor did he ask the reason for it, but the knowledge that such a hatred existed came to him as a decided surprise.

When he had finished his narrative she sat for some little time silent.

"And you think, then," she asked at last, "that his motive for all this is revenge, because his father happened to meet death on the old *May*?"

"So far it has seemed to me that that can be the only possible reason. What else — but now wait a moment while I think."

He went below into his room, secured the old

log of the *M. C. Burns* and the artificial horizon. Together they read the entries that Michael Burns had made.

"Now, Elsa," said Code by way of explanation, "it was a dead-sure thing that Nat could never have beaten me in his schooner, and for two reasons: First, the *May* was a naturally faster boat than the old *M. C.*, although Nat would never admit it. That is what really started our racing. Secondly, I am only telling the truth when I say that I can outsail Nat Burns in any wind from a zephyr to a typhoon.

"He is the kind of chap, in regard to sailing, who doesn't seem to have the 'feel' of the thing. There is a certain instinct of forces and balance that is either natural or acquired. Nat's is acquired. Why, I can remember just as well when I was eight years old my father used to let me take a short trick at the wheel in good weather, and I took to it naturally. Once on the Banks in a gale, when I was only eighteen, the men below said that my trick at the wheel was the only one when they got any sleep.

"Now, those two things being the case, Elsa, how did Nat Burns expect to win the second race from the *May*?"

"I don't know. It doesn't seem possible that he *could* win."

"Of course it doesn't, and yet his father writes here that Nat 'swears he can't lose.' Well, now, you know, a man that swears he can't lose is pretty positive."

"Did he try to bet with you for the second race?" asked Elsa.

"Did he? I had five hundred dollars at the bank and he tried to bet me that. I never bet, because I've never had enough money to throw it around. A good deal changed hands on the first race, but none of it was mine. I raced for sport and not for money, and I told Nat so when he tried to bet with me. If I had raced for money I couldn't have withdrawn that day and gone to St. John for cargo the way I did."

"Then it seems to me that he must have *known* he couldn't lose or he would not have tried to bet."

"Exactly."

"But how *could* he know it?"

"That is what I would like to find out."

Code absently thrust his hand into his coat pocket and encountered the mirror he had found aboard the *Nettie B.* He drew it out and polished its bright surface with his handkerchief.

Elsa was immediately interested and Code told her of its unexpected discovery.

"And *he* had it!" she cried, laughing. "Of all things!"

"Yes, and he always wanted it. I remember when father first gave it to me and I was working out little problems in astronomy, Nat used to take the thing and handle it and admire it. You see the back and edges are silver-plated and it is really quite valuable. He tried to get his father interested, but, so far as I know, never succeeded.

"It was a strange thing, but that simple mirror appealed to Nat tremendously, and you know how that would act on a man of his nature. He is and always has been utterly selfish, and if there was any object he wanted and could not have it increased his desire."

"But how did he get it, I wonder?" asked the girl, taking the object and heliographing the bright sun's rays from the polished surface. "When did you have it last?"

Code knitted his brows and thought back carefully. He had an instinctive feeling that perhaps in this mirror lay the key to the whole situation, just as often in life the most unexpected and trivial things or events are pregnant with great moment.

"I had it," he said slowly, thinking hard; "let me see: the last time I remember it was the day after my first race with Nat. In the desk that stood in the cabin of the old *May* I kept the log, my sextant, and a lot of other things of that kind. In a

lower drawer was this mirror, and the reason I saw it was this:

"When I had made fast to my moorings in the harbor I immediately went below to make the entry in the log about the race — naturally I couldn't leave that undone. I remember I looked in the top drawer for the book, but didn't find it. So then I looked in the other drawers and, in doing so, opened the one containing the mirror.

"I distinctly remember seeing it, for the lamp was lighted and the glass flashed a blinding glare into my eyes. You see we raced in about the worst winter weather there was and the lamp had to be lighted very early.

"The log-book wasn't there, and I found it somewhere or other later, but that hasn't anything to do with the case. I never saw the mirror after that — in fact, never looked for it. I took for granted it had gone down with the *May*, along with all my other things, except the log-book, which I saved and use now aboard the *Lass*."

"And you didn't take it out or give it to anybody?"

"No. I am positive of that. I didn't touch it after seeing it that once."

"Then it is very plain, Code, that if Nat Burns came into possession of it he must have taken it him-

self. He was very angry with you for winning, wasn't he?"

"Terribly. For once I thought he might be dangerous and kept out of his way until the thing had worn off a little."

"Just like him," said Elsa in that tone of bitter hatred that Code had heard her use before when speaking of Burns. "He must have gone aboard the *May* and taken it, because you prized it so much. A fine revenge!"

"Yes, but we don't do those things in Freekirk Head, Elsa. You know that. We don't steal from one another's trawl-lines, and we don't prowl about other men's schooners. I can't understand his doing a thing like that."

"Perhaps not, but if not, explain how he got it."

"You're right," Code admitted after a moment's thought; "that's the only way."

They were silent for a while, pondering over this new development and trying to discover where it might lead. Under sharp commands the crew brought the schooner about on the starboard tack, for the wind was on the bow, and set a staysail between the fore and main masts. The splendid ship seemed to skim over the surface of the sea, touching only the tops of the waves.

"No, it's no good!" broke out Code suddenly.

"Much as I hate Nat Burns, I don't believe he would come aboard my schooner just for the purpose of stealing a silver-plated mirror. That isn't like him. He's too clever to do anything like that. And, besides, what kind of a revenge would that be for having lost the race?"

"Well, what can you suggest? How else did he get it?" Elsa was frankly sceptical and clung to her own theory.

"He might have come aboard for something else, mightn't he, and picked up the mirror just incidentally?"

"He might have, yes, but what else would bring him there?"

Code sat rigid for a few minutes. He had such a thought that he scarcely dared consider it himself.

"It's all clear to me now," he said in a low, hoarse voice. "Nat came aboard to damage the schooner so that he would be sure to win the second race."

"Code!" The cry was one of involuntary horror as Elsa remembered the tragedy of the *May*. Hate Nate though she might, this was an awful charge to lay at his door.

"Then he killed his own father, if what you say is true!" she added breathlessly. "Oh, the poor wretch! The poor wretch!"

"Yes, that solves it," went on Code, who had hardly heard her. "That solves the entries that

Michael Burns made in his ship's log before he went to St. John on his last business trip. Nat swore he could not lose, and the old man, who was honest enough himself, must have wondered what his son was up to.

"This mirror proves that Nat must have been aboard the schooner secretly; what he told his father and his eagerness to bet with me on a proposition that seemed foolhardy on the face of it clinch the thing in my mind. The misguided fool! That, Elsa, is an example of how low a man will go who has been spoiled and brought up without the slightest idea of self-control."

"Why, you're preaching to me, Code," laughed the girl, and he joined her. But she sobered in a moment.

"This is all very fine theory," she said, "and I half believe it myself, but it's worthless; you haven't a grain of proof. Tell me, have you ever thought over the details of the sinking of the *May*?"

"Only once," groaned Schofield, "and I — I hate to do it, Elsa. I'd rather not. Every time I think of that awful day I sweat with sheer horror. Every incident of it is engraved on my brain."

"But listen, Code, you must think about it for once, and think about it with all your mind. Tell me everything that happened. It is vital to our case; it may save the whole thing from being worth-

less. Even if we get nothing you must make the effort."

Code knew that what Elsa said was true. With an effort he focused his mind back on that awful day and began.

"There was a good sea that day," he said, "and more than half a gale out of the northeast. If it had been any other day I shouldn't have taken the old *May* out at all, because she was loaded very deep. But the whole trip was a hurry call and they wanted me to get back to Mignon with the salt as soon as I could.

"Old Burns saw me on the wharf and asked if he could go along as passenger. I said he could, and we started early in the morning. Now that day wasn't anything unusual, Elsa. I've been in a lot worse gales in the *May*, but not with her so deep; but I didn't think anything would happen.

"Everything went all right for three hours, with the wind getting fresher all the time, and the vessel under four lowers, which was a pretty big strain on any schooner. As I say, she should have stood it, but all of a sudden, on a big lurch, the fore topm'st that hadn't a rag on her broke off short and banged down, hanging by the guys. With one swipe it smashed the foregaff to splinters, and half the canvas hung down flapping like a great wing.

"I couldn't understand it. I knew the topm'st

was in a weakened condition, but not as rotten as punk, and I supposed my foregaff was as solid a piece of timber as ever went into a vessel.

"But listen!" as Elsa started to speak. "That isn't all. The flapping canvas, with part of the gaff, pounded around like the devil let loose for the ten seconds before we couldn't loosen the halyards and lower away the wreckage, but in that time it had parted the mainstay in two like a woman snipping a thread.

"Mind that, Elsa, a steel mainstay an inch thick. I never heard of one parting in my life before. Things were happening so fast that I couldn't keep track of them, and now, just at the crucial minute, the old *Mary* jibed, fell off from the wind, and went into the trough of the sea. A great wave came then, ripped her rudder off (I found this as soon as I tried to use the wheel) and swept the decks, taking one man.

"Meanwhile the mainmast, with one stay gone, was whipping from side to side like a great, loose stick. I put the wheel in the becket and in one jump released the mains'l throat-halyards, while another fellow released the peak. The sail came down on the run in the lazy jacks and the men jumped on it and began to crowd it into some kind of a furl.

"I jumped back to the wheel and tried to bring her up into the wind, but I might as well have tried

to steer an ocean liner with a sculling sweep. Not only was her rudder gone, but the tiller ropes were parted on each side. It was damaged beyond repair!

"Once I read in school the funny poem of an American named Holmes. It was called the 'One Hoss Shay,' and it told about an old chaise that, after a hundred years of service, suddenly went to pieces all at the same time and the same place. Even, in that time of danger, the memory of the 'One Hoss Shay' came to me, and I thought that the *May Schofield* was doing exactly the same thing, although only half as old."

"And then what happened?" asked Elsa, who had sat breathless through Code's narrative.

"There's not much more to tell," he said, with an involuntary shudder. "It was too much for the old girl with that load in her. She began to wallow and drive toward the Wolves that I had caught a glimpse of through the scud. She hadn't got half-way there when the mainmast came down (bringing nearly everything with it) and hung over the starboard quarter, dragging the vessel down like a stoat hanging to a duck's leg.

"After that it was easy to see she was doomed. We chopped away at the tangle of wreckage whenever we got a chance, but that wasn't often, because, in her present position, the waves raked her

every second and we had to hang on for dear life.

"And then she began to go to pieces — which was the beginning of the end. All hands knew it was to be every man for himself. We had no life preservers, and our one big dory had been smashed when the wreckage came down."

Code's face was working with suppressed emotion, and Elsa reached out her hand and touched his.

"Don't tell me any more," she said; "I know the rest. Let's talk about the present."

"Thanks, Elsa," he said, gratefully.

"How long have you thought that the schooner was a second 'one hoss shay'?"

"Until this talk with you. I would never have thought anything else. It's the logical thing to think, isn't it? All my neighbors at Freekirk Head, except those who believe the evil they hear, have told me half a dozen times that that is what must have happened to the *May*. She had lived her life and that last great strain, combined with the race the week before, was too much for her. I simply could not explain those things happening."

"Yes, but you can now, can't you?" she asked coolly.

Reluctantly he faced the issue, but he faced it squarely.

"Yes, I can. Nat expected me to sail the *May*

in a race, so he weakened my topm'st and mainstay. Of course, when there is sport in it you set every kite you've got in your lockers and, you know, Elsa, I never took my mains'l in yet while there was one standing in the fleet, even ordinary fishing days."

"I know it; you've scared me half to death a dozen times with your sail-carrying."

"And mind, Elsa, I'd been warned by all the wiseacres in Freekirk Head that my sticks would carry away sometime in a gale o' wind. Nat banked on that, too, and it shows how clever he was, for ever since the *May* sank I've had men tell me I shouldn't have carried four lowers that day.

"He planned to weaken me where I needed sail most and he succeeded. Why, Elsa, that topm'st must have been sawed a quarter of the way through and that mainstay as much again. I don't really believe he did anything to the foregaff; it appeared to be the natural result of the topm'st's falling, but the damage he did resulted in the wreck of the schooner —"

"And the death of his own father. Yes, Code, we've got him where he is probably the wretchedest man in the world. Fury and hurt pride made him injure the *May* so he would be sure to win the second time, and instead of that fate intervened, sent you on the cargo voyage, and killed his father.

Now it is perfectly plain to me why he is charging you with all these crimes."

"Why?"

"Nat is a weak nature, because uncontrolled, and when weak natures do wrong they suffer agonies of fear that they will be found out. Nat committed this double crime in a momentary passion. Then as the weeks passed by and the village talked of nothing else, he finally began to fear that he would be found out.

There was no one who *could* have found him out, but there was that haunting terror of the weak nature.

"Somebody spoke a word, perhaps in jest, that you must have wanted a new schooner since the *May's* policy was to run out so soon, and he seized the thought in a frenzy of joy and began to spread rumors. [This grip on you gave him courage. He remembered that his revenge against you was still unsatisfied and it became clear to him that perhaps, after all, he could get one much more complete.

"Code, the picture of that man's mind is a terrible one to me. He may have hated you before, but just think how he must have hated you after knowing how he had wronged and was going to ruin you. It is only the one of two people who *does* the injury whose hatred grows. An injured person who is sensible in regard to such matters, as you have been

with Nat all your life, throws them off and thinks nothing more about them.

"So Nat's hatred of you and the fear of discovery, preying on his mind, finally urged him into the course he has taken."

"And he went into it with open eyes," rejoined Code, "for his plans were perfect. He pays his crew double wages and they ask no questions. Had it not been for you on two occasions I should have been in jail long before this."

"Yes, but now that is past —"

"No," interrupted Code, "it isn't, Elsa. He has just as much power over me as he ever had. I am still a criminal at large to be arrested, and you can wager your last dollar that if he can bring it about I will be picked up by the first gunboat that finds me."

"But after all this?"

"Yes, after all this. We have made a beautiful case against him and it fits, but, Elsa, there's one thing we haven't got, and that is a single word of proof! We haven't enough to even bring a charge against him. Do you realize that?"

The girl sat back, unable to reply. Code had expressed the situation in a sentence. Despite all they had pieced together he, Code, was still the man against whom the burden of circumstantial evidence rested. Nat was, and always could go, scot free.

"Code, this is terrible!" she said. "But there

may be a way out yet. No man with the right on his side has ever failed to triumph, however black things looked."

"But how?" he cried despairingly. "I have racked my brains for some means of closing the net about him, but there seems no way."

"Now there is not," she returned, "but, Code, you can rest assured that I will do everything I can."

"God bless you," he said, taking her hand; "you are the best friend a man ever had."

CHAPTER XXVI

WETTING THEIR SALT

PETE ELLINWOOD, alone except for the cook, who sat peeling potatoes just outside the galley, paced the quarter-deck of the *Charming Lass*.

He seemed to be an older man than that night when, goaded beyond endurance by the taunts of the big Frenchman, he had fought a fight that would long be remembered in the streets of the roaring town of St. Pierre.

He felt that he had broken his promise to Ma Schofield that he would keep guard over her boy. Now, for all he knew, that boy was lying in jail at St. Andrew's, or was perhaps defending his life in the murderer's pen.

The night of the fight had been a wild one for Ellinwood.

At the cry of "Police!" the crowd had seemed to melt away from him like the bank fog at the sweep of a breeze. A dozen comrades had seized the prostrate Jean and hurried him away, and Pete, with

the instinct of self-preservation, had snatched up his clothes and dodged down a dark alley toward the dirty drinking-shops along the water-front.

There, as he dressed himself, he first asked the question, "Where is Code?"

Then, in a frenzy of remorse, he returned to the street and began a wild and fruitless search all night. Then he accidentally learned that the *Nettie B.* had been in port two days and that her crew had been ashore on the night of the fracas.

Sorrowful, bedraggled, and bruised, he rowed out to the *Charming Lass* just as the whole crew was setting out for shore to search for Code and himself.

During the night the barrels of fresh bait had been lightered to the *Lass*, and there was nothing for it but to make sail and get back on the Banks as soon as possible, leaving Code to his fate but carrying on the work he had begun.

In accordance with Code's instructions, Pete automatically became the skipper of the schooner, and he selected Jimmie Thomas as his mate. By night-fall they had picked up the fleet, and early the next morning the dories were out. Then for eight days it had been nothing but fish, fish, fish.

Never in all his experience had Pete seen such schools of cod. They were evidently herding together in thousands, and had found but scanty food

for such great hosts, for they bit almost on the bare hook.

Now, as he looked around the still sea, the white or yellow sails of the fishing fleet showed on all sides in a vast circle. Not five miles away was the *Rosan*, and to the southward of her the *Herring Bone* with mean old Jed Martin aboard. Bijonah Tanner had tried his best to shake Martin, but the hard-fisted old skipper, knowing and recognizing Tanner's "nose" for fish, had clung like a leech and profited by the other's sagacity.

Nor was this all the Grande Mignon fleet.

There were Gloucestermen among it, the champion fishers of the world, who spent their spare time in drifting past the English boats and hurling salty wit — at which pastime they often came off second best.

There were Frenchmen, too, from the Miquelon Islands, who worked in colored caps and wore sheath-knives in belts around their waists. Pete often looked over their dirty decks and wondered if his late enemy were among them. There were also vessels called "toothpicks" that did an exclusive trawling business, never using dories except to underrun the trawls or to set them out. These vessels were built on yacht lines and, because they filled their holds quickly, made quick runs to port with their catches, thus getting in several trips in a season.

Also, there were the steam trawlers, the most progressive of the fleet, owned and operated by huge fish firms in Boston or Portland. These were not dependent on the vagaries of the wind and steamed wherever their skippers divined that fish might be.

Last of all were the seiners after herring and mackerel, schooners mostly, and out of Gloucester or Nova Scotia ports, who secured their catch by encircling schools of fish that played atop of the water with nets a quarter of a mile long, and pursued them in by drawstrings much as a man closes a tobacco-pouch.

This was the cosmopolitan city that lived on the unmarked lanes of the ocean and preyed upon the never-failing supplies of fish that moved beneath.

Among the Grande Mignon boats there was intense rivalry. In the holds the layers of salted fish rose steadily under the phenomenal fishing. The salt-barrels were emptied and crowded out by the cod, hake, and pollock. It was these boats that Ellinwood watched with the eye of a hawk, for back in Freekirk Head he knew that Bill Boughton stood ready to pay a bonus for the first cargo to reach port. Now was the time when the advance orders from the West Indies were coming up, and, because of the failure of the season on the island itself, these orders stood unfilled.

One or two of the smallest sloops had already wet

their salt and weighed anchor for home, taking letters and messages; but these, Pete knew, could only supply an infinitesimal portion of the demand. What Boughton looked for was a healthy load of fifteen hundred to two thousand quintals all ready for drying.

Night and day the work went on. With the first signs of daylight the dories were swung outboard and the men took their positions. A catch of two hundred good-sized cod was now considered the usual thing for a handliner, and night after night the piles of silver fish in the pens amidships seemed to grow in size.

Now they dressed down under lantern light, sometimes aided by the moon, and the men stood to the tables until they fell asleep on their feet and split their fingers instead of the fish. Then, after buckets of hot coffee, they would fall to again and never stop until the last wet body had been laid atop of its thousands of brothers.

The men were constantly on the trawls. Sometimes they did nothing all day but pick the fish and rebait, finding, after a trip to the schooner to unload, that a thousand others had struck on the long lines of sagging hooks while they were gone.

It was fast and feverish work, and it seemed as though it would never end.

The situation had resolved itself into a race be-

tween the schooners, and Ellinwood was of no mind to come off second best. Like a jockey before a race, he watched his rivals.

He knew that foxy Bijonah Tanner, who sometimes looked like an old hump-backed cod himself, was his most dangerous rival. Tanner said nothing, but his boats were out early and in late, and the lanterns on his deck over the dressing pens could sometimes be seen as late as ten o'clock at night.

Visits among the fleet had now ceased, both because there was no time for it, and because a man from another schooner was looked upon as a spy.

At the start of the season it had been expected that Nat Burns in the *Nettie B.* would prove a strong contender for premier honors, but, because of his ceaseless efforts to drive home his revenge, Nat had done very little fishing and therefore could not possibly be in the market.

Other Freekirk Head men shrugged their shoulders at this. Nat had the money, and could act that way if it pleased him, they said. But, nevertheless, he lost favor with a great many of his former friends, for the reason that the whole fishing expedition had been a concerted movement to save the people and credit of the island, and not an exploitation of individual desires.

Burns had, with his customary indifference to others, made it just exactly such an exploitation, and the

sentiment that had been strong for him at the outset of the cruise was now turning decidedly the other way; although he little guessed this or would have been influenced had he done so.

In reality, then, the race for fish was keenest between the *Charming Lass*, the *Rosan*, and the *Herring Bone*, with three other schooners very close on their heels.

At the end of the nine days there was little space beneath the deck planks of the *Charming Lass*, but every night Pete would come up, slapping his hands free of salt, and say, "Wal, boys, I guess we can crowd another day's work into her," and the exhausted men would gather themselves for another great effort as they rolled forward into their bunks.

Every twenty-four hours they did crowd another day's work into her, so that she carried nearly a hundred and fifty tons and the dripping brine had to be pumped out of the hold.

It was the night of the day that opened this chapter.

The lanterns by which the men had dressed down had been lifted from their supports, the cod livers dumped into the gurry-butt, and the tables removed from the rails. The two men on the first watch were sharpening the splitting knives on a tiny grindstone and walking forward occasionally to see that the anchor and trawl buoy lights were burning.

The still air resounded with the snores of the exhausted men forward in the forecastle.

Silently out of the darkness a dory came toward the schooner, pulled by the brawny arms of two men. In the stern of the oncoming boat sat a solitary figure, who strained his eyes toward his destination.

The dory was within fifty yards of the *Lass* before the men on deck became aware of its approach. Then, fearing some evil work in connection with the last desperate days of fishing, they rushed to the bulwarks and challenged the newcomers. They did not see, a mile away, a schooner without lights gently rising and falling on the oily sea.

"Who is that?" demanded one man, but he received no answer except "A friend," and the boat continued its stealthy approach. It drew alongside the ladder in the waist, and the man in the stern-sheets rose. Kent of the *Lass's* crew leaned over the side and threw the light of his lantern upon the man.

"By God," he cried like one who has seen a ghost, "it's the skipper."

CHAPTER XXVII

THE REWARD OF EVIL

THE *Nettie B.* was surging north, nearing Cape Breton. Nat Burns sat moodily on the top of the house and watched the schooner take 'em green over her bows.

Within the last day a fog with a wind behind it had drifted across the lead-colored ocean; and now, although the fog was gone, the wind was still howling and bringing with it a rising sea.

The equinoxes were not far off, and all skippers had a weather eye out, and paid especial attention to the stoutness of lashings and patched canvas.

Never had Burns been in a blacker mood, and never had he better cause.

He was three days from St. Andrew's, and there he had become acquainted with several facts.

The first was that no Canadian gunboat by the name of *Albatross* had called at said port and left any prisoner by the name of Code Schofield — in fact, such gunboat had not called at all.

Investigation at the admiralty office proved to Nat that the real *Albatross* had reported from St.

John's, Newfoundland, on the very day he supposed he had met her. As the waters near St. Andrew's and St. John's are several hundreds of miles apart, Nat was not long in forming the opinion that he had been duped.

Fuming with rage, he began to investigate. Gradually he learned the story (from sailors in wine-shops and general hearsay) of the mysterious schooner that had twice saved Code Schofield from actual capture, and had aided him on one or two other occasions.

One man said he had heard of a retired naval officer named Foraker, who was supposed to be in command. As a matter of fact, there was a Captain Foraker aboard the schooner who navigated her and instilled the "run and jump" discipline that had so excited Code's admiration. Outside of this vague fact, Nat's knowledge was scant.

He was ignorant of who owned the swift vessel. He would never have connected Elsa Mallaby with her in ten years of hard thinking. All he did know was that some unknown agency was suddenly at work in behalf of the man he hated.

He notified the admiralty that a strange schooner had impersonated the gunboat of H. I. M. George V, and gave a very accurate description of her.

As this was a new offense for the vessel that had already interfered with justice twice, the skippers of

all the revenue cutters along the coast bent their energies to capturing or sinking this semipiratical craft, upon the receipt of radiograms to that effect.

Not only had Nat set the machinery of the law in motion against the mystery schooner, but he had provided against any future dabbling with his constabulary powers by the simple expedient of having with him an officer of the law who was empowered to bring the accused murderer of Michael Burns before the bar of justice without transfer.

When the supposed gunboat had removed the prisoner from his deck and borne away (for a while) on the course to St. Andrew's, Nat, relieved of responsibility, ran over to Grande Mignon and into the harbor of Freekirk Head.

His purpose in this was twofold, and treacherous in both cases. First he lost no time in spreading the details of how Code Schofield had been captured in a drunken brawl at St. Pierre and was fighting the jailers in St. Andrew's. Secondly, he had a long private interview with Bill Boughton, in which he tried to get the storekeeper to sign a contract for his (Burns's) fish at a certain price.

While the former was meanness of a hideous kind, this latter move was one of treachery against the men of Freekirk Head. The worst part of it was that Nat had about a hundred quintals of splendid-looking cod (every pound he had caught) in his

hold, and these he handed over to Boughton as a sample of what was to come from him very shortly.

Boughton was hard up for fish, for none had come from the Banks, and bought them at a big price. But as to the signing of the contract, he demurred. When Nat could not explain why he had caught so few fish in such a long time, the storekeeper became wary and refused to commit himself. Finally he agreed to the price if Nat would deliver a thousand quintals before any of the rest of the fleet arrived home.

Consequently it was up mainsail and sway 'em flat and a fast run north for the *Nettie B.*

During his day's stay in Freekirk Head he had received a great bag of mail for the men of the fleet from their womenfolk at home, and this he had in his cabin, now all distributed and tied into bundles, one for each schooner, so that they could be easily sorted and thrown aboard as he met them.

Burns caught the fleet of a Thursday morning, just as they had dropped anchors after making a night berth, and the dories were out sampling the ground and the fish. It was just three days after Code had arrived aboard the *Charming Lass* again.

As Nat worked his way in and out among the vessels, throwing their mail aboard attached to pieces of coal, he kept an eye out for the *Rosan*. One very important piece of business that had brought him

North was a reconciliation with Nellie Tanner, and he meant, while his men were out in the dories, to accomplish this first.

At last he sighted her near the very front line of the fleet. The *Charming Lass* he could not see, for Code had taken a different direction from the *Rosan*, and was one of the score of sails scattered around the horizon. But Nat was in no great hurry to get him on the minute; if the mystery schooner were attended to, then it would be merely a matter of time until the capture of Code.

He ranged up astern of the *Rosan* with a cheery yell and let go his anchor, ordering the dories over the side in the same breath. But his aspirations received a chilling setback from none other than Bijonah Tanner himself. The old man had been sleepless for a week, trying to nose out the *Lass* for the top haul of the fleet, and here was a young scapegrace who came and cast anchor within a hundred yards of his chosen ground.

Nat laughed carelessly at the storm of abuse that rattled over the stern of the *Rosan* and rowed over to her in his dory with the package of mail.

"Forget it, papa," he said, easily insolent, as he climbed over the rail in the teeth of a broadside. "We're not goin' to foul your rodin' or steal your fish. I've just come to make a call and tell you the news from home."

He handed Bijonah a couple of letters and a package containing those of the men. Two others he kept in his hand.

For a few moments he chatted with the old man, telling him what had happened in Freekirk Head. Then he asked for Nellie, whom he had not seen. As he asked she came up out of the cabin, having just finished breakfast.

She was dressed in white this morning; a white canvas blouse with a broad blue collar and V-neck held to modest stricture by a flowing blue tie, a white duck skirt and whitened shoes—a costume that set off her pink cheeks and bright eyes.

Since the violent emotions of the fire at the Head, her courtship, and her self-analyzation since her split with Nat, she had seemed to become more of a woman.

Nat had not the slightest doubt but that Nellie by this time would have recovered from her angry pet of their last interview. He was very certain that their ruction had only been temporary.

Nellie was unfeignedly glad to see him.

He stretched out his arms to her impulsively, but she refused him, and he laughed the rebuff off good-naturedly.

“Oh, did you bring any letters for me?” she cried eagerly.

He held out the two he had kept in his hand.

"Oh, goodness, Nat — only from mama and Lutie Bissell. You excited me so!"

He spread a tarpaulin amid the clutter amidships and they sat down.

She excused herself and began to read her letters, first opening the one from the girl friend, which, as such letters usually do, contained nothing of importance. Then she opened the one from her mother. It was long, and she settled back to the pleasure of deciphering it.

Nat smoked and whistled and looked out to sea, waiting for her to finish. Therefore he did not observe the changes that passed across her face. Near the middle of the letter the color rose to her forehead in a hot wave, but at the end it had receded, leaving her pale. Methodically she folded the letter and returned it to its envelope.

"Well, dearest," he said cheerfully, "all through? Now I want to talk to you —" He reached for her hand, but she withdrew it beyond his reach and looked at him with the steady brown eyes whose level gaze he hated.

"Come on, now, Nellie," he said impatiently, stung by her relentlessness, "you ain't goin' to be mad forever about that other time, are you? I was out of temper an' said things —"

"Mother was up to Mallaby House for dinner a little while ago," interrupted Nellie, as though she had not heard him.

"Yes? That's good. Fine place, ain't it? As I was sayin', I forgot myself —"

"They talked about us, too; mother says that's nearly all they talked about."

"Must've been short of conversation. An' I want to say, Nellie, that I'll try never to speak like that to you again. I —"

"Mother says she learned things about you that she never had imagined before," persisted Nellie, with quiet insistence. But again Nat did not seem to have heard her. With an awkward motion he drew from his pocket the little glazed paper box that contained the engagement-ring.

"Please," he said, "I want you to take this again." He was in earnest.

"It's strange Elsa Mallaby should be able to tell mother things about you."

Nat lost his patience. He had tried his best to make peace, and the girl was only baiting him for her own amusement.

"What the deuce is all this about that Mallaby woman?" he asked. "I should think you'd listen to me, Nellie."

"If you will listen to me first, then I'll listen to you as long as you like."

"I agree," he said, thrusting the ring-box back into his pocket, "only make it short, will you, little girl?"

"Yes, I will," she promised, without smiling. "I merely said that mother and Mrs. Mallaby had discussed you and me, and our marriage, and that Mrs. Mallaby had said some things about you."

"Well, lots of people do that," he smiled.

"Yes — but they haven't said just this thing, Nat."

"What was that?"

"I'm going to let you think. Just suppose that Mrs. Mallaby hated you very much and wanted to do you harm. What would she tell my mother?"

The girl, pale and on the verge of an hysterical outburst, watched his face out of her mask of self-control.

The blood beneath his tan receded and was replaced by a sickly greenish hue. That flash had brought its memory — a memory that had lain buried beneath the events of his later life. Did she know? How could she know?

To the girl watching him there was confirmation enough. She was suddenly filled with inexpressible distaste for this man who had in days past smothered her with caresses and dinned into her ears speeches concerning a passion that he called love.

"I see it is all true," she said quietly. "This

is all I have to say. Now I will listen to what you were going to tell me a few minutes ago — that is, if you still wish to say it.”

Nat read his doom in those few calm words. The things that had been in his mind to say rose and choked his throat; the thought of the ring in his pocket seemed like profanation. He gulped twice and tried to speak, but the words clotted on his tongue.

Still she sat quietly looking at him, politely ready to listen.

With a horrible croaking sound he got to his feet, looked irresolutely at her for a moment, and then went to the side where his dory lay. She next saw him rowing dazedly to the *Nettie B.*, and then she turned her face from the sight of him.

And suddenly into her mind, long prepared, came the thought of Code Schofield. Amid the chaos of her shattered ideals his face and figure rose more desirable than all the earth.

“Oh, Heaven, give him to me — some time!” she breathed in a voice of humble prayer.

Nat Burns went back to his schooner, squarely defeated for the first time in his life. Humbled, and cringing like a whipped dog, he made his dory fast to the *Nettie's* rail and slunk aft to the solitude of his cabin. He was glad that even the cook was looking the other way.

"She has flouted me, and the whole of Grande Mignon will know it," he said to himself. "Then they will want to know why, but that is easy enough to lie about. Hang that Mallaby woman! Who would ever think she'd squeal? Yes, and Schofield, the smug crook! They're the two that are doin' the damage to me."

Nat's lifelong knowledge of Code's and Nellie's affection returned to him now with a more poignant pang of memory than he had ever experienced. With the hopeless egotism of a totally selfish nature, he laid his calamity in love to activity on Code's part. He was pretty well aware of Elsa's extravagant favoritism of Code, and he immediately figured that Code had enlisted Elsa on his side to the ruin of Nat.

"So I've got to beat 'em all now, have I?" he asked grimly, his jaw setting with an ugly click. "Schofield and Mallaby, and—yes—while I'm about it, Tanner, too. The old man never liked me, the girl hates me, and I wouldn't mind giving 'em a dig along with the rest. Just to show 'em that I'm not so easy an' peaceful as I look! But how?"

For a considerable space of time he sat there, his head low on his breast, and his eyes half closed as his brain went over scheme after scheme. The detective that Nat had brought from St. Andrew's stuck his head down the cabin and remarked:

"Look here, captain, I want to arrest my man and get back. Why don't you hunt up that ship and let me finish?"

"I've got something a lot better on hand, Durkee," remarked Nat with a grin, rising from his chair, a plan having leaped full blown into his mind. "Just stick along with me and you'll get your man, all right."

He went outside and called the men in with a revolver-shot and a trawl tub run to the masthead. It was about noon when they came in, and, after eating, three o'clock passed before they had finished dressing down.

"Any of you boys run across a dory from the *Night Hawk*?" asked Nat as the men came inboard with their shower of fish.

"Yes," said a youth, "I f'und one of 'em an' he told me the *Hawk's* luck was Jonah'd this trip."

"Where's the packet lyin'?"

"About twelve mile sou'east near the edge of the Bank."

Nat went to the wheel himself.

"Up jib an' fores'l," he sung out, "and sway 'em flat! Mains'l and tops'ls after that! Raymond, overhaul the balloon, stays'l, and trys'l! Mebbe we'll drive her a little afore we're through."

Burns found the *Night Hawk* in a patch of sea by herself, more or less deserted by the other schoon-

ers because of the Jonah report that had gone abroad concerning her. Her dories were just coming in from the day's work partially loaded with fish.

"Hello!" bawled Nat. "Is Billy Stetson aboard?" Billy was the skipper.

"Yas; d'ye want to see him?"

"Yes, send him along over. It's mighty important, but I ain't goin' aboard no Jonah boat. Tell him he'll be glad he came."

Presently Stetson came and the two retired into the cabin of the *Nettie B.*

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE RACE

IT was dawn of a heavy, dark day. There was a mighty sea rolling and a forty-mile wind off the Cape shore that promised a three-day ruction. The *Charming Lass* at her anchor reared and plunged like a nervous horse.

Weighty with fish, she struggled heroically up the great walls of water, only to plump her sharp bows into the hollow with a force that half buried her. Between times she wriggled and capered like a dancing elephant and jerked at her cable until it seemed as though she would take her windlass out.

In the midst of all this Code Schofield struggled aft and began hauling forth the mains'l that at the first edge of the Bank had been relegated in favor of the triangular riding sail.

Pete Ellinwood saw him, and in a great voice bawled down the hatchway to the fo'c's'le.

"Salt's wet, boys; the skipper's haulin' out the mains'l!" At which there broke forth the most extravagant sounds of jubilation and all hands tumbled up to help bend it on.

The crew of the *Lass* did not know it, but Bijonah Tanner and the *Rosan* had actually been gone twelve hours, having stolen away from the fleet before dressing down the night before when darkness had fallen. And so successfully had Jed Martin stolen Bijonah's thunder that he had left but three hours later — when the fish had been dressed.

Schofield was honest with himself, and he waited until morning to see if the great stacks of fish would not settle enough to allow of another day's work to be crowded in. But when he saw that space above the fish was very small he waited no longer.

Four men heaved on the windlass brakes, and the others got sail on her as fast as they could haul halyards. She started under jib, jumbo, fore and mains'l, with the wind a little on her port quarter and every fiber of her yearning to go.

When the sails were apparently flat as boards Schofield made Ellinwood rig pulleys leading to the middle of the halyards so that the men could sway on them. She was fit as a racing yacht; her load was perfectly distributed and she trimmed to a hair-breadth.

An hour later they snored down upon the *Night Hawk*, the last vessel at the edge of the fleet.

"Better hurry!" megaphoned Stetson, tickled with himself. "Burns cleared six hours ago for

Freekirk Head with a thousand quintal. He's got Boughton sewed up to buy 'em, too."

"Bring her to!" snarled Code, and the *Lass*, groaning and complaining at the brutality, whirled up into the wind enough to take her sticks out. "Burns's going home, you say? And with fish? Where'd he get 'em?"

"From me. I sold him my whole load at a better price than I would have got if I had waited to fill the *Hawk's* belly and then gone home. Gave me cash and threw in a lot of bait, so I'll stay right out here and get another load. Petty good for a Jonah — what? Ha, ha!" The man roared exasperatingly.

"Damnation!" rapped out Schofield. "Lively now! Tops'ls on her, and two of you stay aloft to shift tacks if we should need to come about."

"Hey, you!" bawled Stetson as the *Lass* began to heel to the great sweep of the wind. "There's two ahead of him, Bijonah Tanner an' Jed Martin! Better hurry if you're going to catch the market!"

"Hurry, is it?" growled Code to himself. "I'll hurry so some people won't know who it is."

It was the first time that Code had had occasion to drive the *Lass*, for the Mignon fishermen heretofore had confined their labor to the shoals near home or, at farthest, on the Nova Scotia coast. The present occasion was different.

Between where he lay and the friendly sight of Swallowtail Light was more than eight hundred and fifty miles of wallowing, tumbling ocean. Treacherous shoals underran it, biting rocks pierced up in saw-toothed reefs, the bitterest gales of all the seas swept in leaden wastes.

It was a cutthroat business, this mighty pull for the market; but upon it not only depended the practical consideration of the highest market prices, but the honor and glory of owning the fastest schooner out of Freekirk Head. The task of the *Charming Lass* was delightful in its simplicity, but fearful in its arduousness.

Jimmie Thomas came aft and stood by the wheel on the port side. It took two men to handle her now, for the vast, dead weight in her hold flung her forward and sidewise, despite the muscular clutch on the wheel, and when she rolled down she came up sluggishly.

"Isn't she a dog, though, Code?" exclaimed Jimmie in admiration. "Look at that now! Rose to it like a duck. See her now jest a-playin' with them waves! Jest a-playin'! Oh, she's a dog, skipper — a dog, I tell ye! Drive her! She loves it!"

"I'll drive her, Jimmie; don't you worry. Before I get through some fellers I know'll wish they'd never heard of driving." He motioned Pete Ellinwood aft with a free hand.

"Tell the boys," said Code, "that what sleepin' they do between here and home will be on their feet, for I want all hands ready to jump to orders. They can mug up day and night, but let nobody get his boots off."

"Ay, ay, sir!" replied Pete involuntarily. This bright-eyed, firm-mouthed skipper was a different being from the cheerful, careless boy he had been familiar with for years. There was the ring of confidence and command in his voice that inspired respect. "Look out there! Jump for it!"

The head of the *Lass* went down with a sickening swoop and the sound of thunder. A great, gray-and-white wall boiled and raced over her bows. Ellinwood leaped for the weather-rigging and the other two clutched the wheel as they stood waist-deep in the surge that roared over the taffrail and to leeward.

"Pass the life-lines, Pete," ordered Code, and all hands passed stout ropes from rigging to house to rail, forward and astern, so that there might be something to leap for when the *Lass* was boarded by a Niagara.

Ellinwood got out two stout lines and made one fast around Code's waist, leading it to the starboard bitt. The other fastened Jimmie to the port bitt, so that if they were washed overboard they might be hauled back to safety and life again.

"Looks like she was blowin' up a little!" remarked Pete later in the day as the *Lass* rolled down to her sheerpoles in a sudden rain squall. "Better take in them tops'ls, hadn't ye, skipper?"

"Take in nothing!" snapped Code across the cabin table. "Any canvas that comes off this vessel between here and Freekirk Head blows off, unless we have passed all those schooners ahead of us. Haven't raised any of 'em, have you?"

"Not yet, skipper; but we ought to by night," said Ellinwood as though he felt he was personally to blame. "But let me tell you somethin', skipper. It's all right to carry sail, but if you get your sticks ripped out you won't be able to get anywhere at all."

"If my sticks go, let 'em go, I'll take my medicine; but I'll tell you this much, Pete, that nobody is going to beat me home while I've got a stick to carry canvas, unless they have a better packet than the *Charming Lass* — which I know well they haven't."

"That's the spirit, skipper!" yelled Ellinwood, secretly pleased.

There is no telling exactly what speed certain fishing schooners have made on their great drives from the Banks. Some men go so far as to claim that the old China tea clippers have lost their laurels both for daily runs and for passages up to four thousand miles.

One ambitious man hazards his opinion (and he is one who ought to know) that a fishing schooner has done her eighteen knots or upward for numerous individual hours, for fishermen, even on record passages, fail to haul the log sometimes for half a day at a time.

Schofield, however, took occasion to have the log hauled for one especially squally mile, and the figures showed that the *Lass* had covered fifteen knots in the hour — seventeen and a half land miles.

She was booming along now, seeming to leap from one great crest to the next like a giant projectile driven by some irresistible force. She was canted at such an angle that her lee rail was invisible under the boiling white, and her deck planks seemed a part of the sea.

The course was almost exactly southwest, and that first day the *Lass* roared down the Atlantic, passing the wide mouth of Cabot Strait that leads between Newfoundland and Nova Scotia into the Gulf of St. Lawrence. They passed one of the Quebec and Montreal liners, and took pleasure shooting the schooner under her flaring bows.

The next morning at seven, twenty-four hours out, found them three hundred and fifty miles on their course, but what was better than all, showed three sails ahead. Then did the crew of the *Charming Lass* rejoice, climbing into the spray-lashed rig-

ging, and yelling wildly against the tumult of the waters.

Nor did the wind subside. It had gone to forty-five miles an hour over night, and in landlocked harbors the skippers of big steel passenger vessels shook their heads and refused to venture out into the gale.

As well as could be judged, the *Nettie B.*, *Rosan*, and *Herring Bone* were nearly on even terms twenty miles ahead, all with every stitch set and flying like leaves before a wind.

"Bend on balloon jib!" snapped Schofield when he had considered the task before him. Pete ran joyfully to execute the order, but some of the men hesitated.

"Up with her!" roared Pete, and up she went, a great concave hollow of white like the half of a pear. The *Lass's* head went down, and now, instead of attempting to go over the waves, she went through them without argument.

Tons of divided water crashed down upon her decks and roared off over the rails, the men at the wheel were never less than knee-deep. The sheets strained, the timbers creaked, and the sails roared, and back of all were the wind and the North Atlantic in hot pursuit.

By noon it could be seen that the three vessels ahead were commencing to come back, but with terrible slowness. Code, lashed in the weather rigging,

studied them for more than an hour through his glasses. Then he leaped to the deck.

"Hell's bells! No wonder we can't catch 'em! Burns has got stays'l set, and I think Tanner has, too. Couldn't see Martin. Set stays'l, all hands!"

Under the driving of Ellinwood the staysail was set, and from then on the *Charming Lass* sailed on her side.

At every roll her sheerpoles were buried, and it seemed an open question whether she would ever come up or not. It was at this time that Tip O'Neill, a daring young buck of Freekirk Head, performed the highly dangerous feat of walking from her main to her forerigging along the weather run, which fact shows there was foothold on her uppermost side for a man crazy enough to desire it.

That Ellinwood and the daring Jimmie Thomas were thoroughly in accord with Schofield's preposterous sail-carrying was a foregone conclusion. But others of the crew were not of the same mind. An hour more here or there seemed a small matter to them as compared to the chance of drowning and leaving a family unprotected and unprovided for.

Schofield sensed this feeling immediately it had manifested itself, and he called his lieutenants to him. He wished to provide against interference.

"House the halyards aloft!" he commanded, and at this even those two daring souls stood aghast,

for it meant that whatever the emergency no sail could be taken off the *Charming Lass*. With the end of the halyards aloft no man could reach them in time to avert a catastrophe.

"You're sure drivin' her, skipper!" roared Pete in amazed admiration. "Up them halyards go. Oh, Lord, but she's a dog, an' she'll stand it."

So up the halyards went, and with them went a warning that whoever jumped to loosen them would get a gaff-hook in his breeches and be hauled down ignominiously.

This time when the log was hauled for the hour from three to four in the afternoon it showed a total of seventeen knots, or a fraction under twenty miles for the hour. And best of all, the three flying schooners had come back five miles. By ten o'clock that night Code judged they had come back five more, and knew that the next day would bring the test.

They were not in over-deep water here, for the coast of Nova Scotia is extended for miles out under the sea in excellent fishing shoals and banks.

At Artimon Bank they switched their course to westward so as to pass inside of Sable Island and round Cape Sable in the shoalest water possible. Down across Western they roared, and almost to Le Have before midnight came.

Now it is one thing to sail like the Flying Dutch-

man with the sun up and one's eyes to use, but it is another to career through the night without taking in a stitch of canvas, trusting to luck and the Providence that watches over fishermen that the compass is good and that no blundering coasters will get in the way.

When dawn broke wild and dirty, the *Charming Lass* was reeling through the water less than a quarter of a mile astern of the *Rosan* and the *Herring Bone*. Through the murk Code could see the *Nettie B.* three miles ahead.

An hour and she had drawn abreast of her two rivals; another hour and she had left them astern. Day had fully broken now, and Code, grinning over his shoulder at the defeated schooners, gave a cry of surprise. For no longer were there two only. Another, plunging through the mist, had come into view; far back she was, but carrying a spread of canvas that gave indications enough of her speed.

But Code spent little time looking back. He gripped the wheel, set his teeth, and urged the *Lass* forward after the *Nettie* with every faculty of his power. After that terrible night the crew had lost their fear and worked with enthusiasm.

Some hands were always at the pumps, when they could be worked, for besides the brine from the fish gathering below, Code feared the vessel had spewed some oakum and was taking a little water forward.

Now, too, the horrible stench of riled bilge-water floated over all — compared to which an aged egg is a bouquet of roses.

At eight o'clock that morning they rounded Cape Sable at the tip of Nova Scotia, and laid a course a trifle west of north for the final beat home. [There was a hundred miles to go, and Burns still held his three-mile lead.

By herself and loaded only with ballast, the *Nettie* was a better sailor in a beating game, for she was older and heavier than the *Charming Lass*. But now she had but a thousand quintal of fish compared to the sixteen hundred of her rival. This difference gave the *Lass* much needed stability without which she could never have hoped to win from the Burns schooner.

The two were, therefore, about equally matched, and it was evident that the contest would resolve itself into one of sail-carrying, seamanship, and nerve.

"That other feller's comin' up fast!" said Pete Ellinwood, and Code looked back to see the strange schooner looming larger and larger in his wake. He knew that no vessel in the Grande Mignon fleet could ever have caught the *Lass* the way he had been driving her, and yet she was not near enough for him to get a good view of her.

"If she's a fisherman," said Code, "I'll pull the *Lass* out of water before she beats us in."

It was killing work, the last beat home.

"Hard a-lee!" would come the command, and some men would go down into the smother of the lee-rail and haul in or slack away sheets, while others at the mastheads would shift top- and stay-sail tacks.

Her head would swing, there would be a minute of thrashing and roaring of gear, and the gale would leap into her sails and bend her down on her side again. Then away she would go.

The station of those on deck was a good two-handed grip on the ringbolts under the weather-rail, where, so great was the slope of the deck, they clung desperately for fear of sliding down and into the swirling torrent.

Hour after hour the *Nettie* and the *Lass* fought it out, and hour after hour the gale increased. Hurricane warnings had been issued all along the coast, and not a vessel ventured out, but these stanch fishing vessels cared not a whit.

It was evident, however, that something must give. Human ingenuity had not constructed a vessel that could stand such driving. Even Pete Ellinwood began to lose his heartiness as the *Lass* went down and stayed down longer with each vicious squall.

"Shut up, Pete!" said Code, when the mate started to speak. "No sail comes off but what blows off, and while there's all sail on the *Nettie* I

carry all sail if I heave her down for it. Watch him, he'll break. Burns is yellow."

The words were a prophecy. He had hardly uttered them when down came the great balloon jib of the *Nettie B.* At once the *Lass* began to gain in great leaps and bounds. They were fifty miles from home and two miles only separated them.

But fortune had not finished with Code. Half an hour later there came a great sound of tearing like the volley of small arms, and the *Lass's* balloon jib ripped loose and soared to heaven like some gigantic wounded bird.

"Let it go, curse it," growled Code. "Anyway, I didn't take it down."

The loss of her big jib was the only thing that saved the *Lass* from being hove down completely, for two hours later the gale had reached its height, and she was laboring like a drunken man under her staysail, topsail, and four lowers.

Twenty miles from home and the two schooners were abreast, tacking together on the long leeward reaches and the short windward ones, as they made across the Bay of Fundy.

"Look at her comin' like a racehorse!" cried Ellinwood again, and this time Code recognized the vessel that was pursuing them. It was the mystery schooner, and in all his life at sea Code had never seen a ship fly as that one was flying then.

"Wonder what she's up to now?" he asked vaguely. But he gave no further thought to the matter, for the *Nettie B.* claimed all his attention. Suddenly from between the masts of the Burns schooner a great flutter of white appeared as though some one had hung a huge sheet from her stay.

"Ha, I told you he was yellow!" shouted Code in glee. "Somebody's cut away one edge of the stays'l. Now we've got 'em!"

And they had; for within a quarter of an hour they left the *Nettie B.* astern, finally defeated, Nat Burns's last act of treachery gone for nothing.

But the mystery schooner would not be denied. Though the *Lass* made her seventeen knots, the wonderful Mallaby schooner did her twenty, with everything spread in that gale; and when the white lighthouse of Swallowtail Point was in plain sight through the murk, she swept by like a magnificent racer and beat the *Charming Lass* to moorings by twenty minutes.

Half an hour behind Schofield came the Burns boat, but in that time Code Schofield had already hurried ashore in his dory and clinched his sale price with Bill Boughton, who also assured him of the bonus offered for the first vessel in.

Like Code, the first thing Nat did, when his schooner had come up into the wind with jib and foresail on the run, was to take a dory ashore. In

it, besides himself, was a man. These two encountered Code just as he came out of Boughton's store.

The second, who was tall and broad-shouldered, threw back his coat and displayed a government shield. Then he laid his hand on Code's arm.

"Captain Schofield," he said, "you are under arrest!"

CHAPTER XXIX

A FATAL LETTER

FOR the last of many days the light-house-keeper had watched from his aerie for the coming of the fleet — and had not been disappointed.

His horse and buggy stood by the tower doorstep, and into it he leaped, whipping up the horse with the same motion. Then down the road he had flown like Paul Revere rousing the villagers, and followed by an excited, half-hysterical procession of women and children.

So thick had been the murk and scud that he had only caught sight of the approaching leader while she was a bare two miles off the point, and even when Nat had landed the crowd was momentarily being augmented from all the houses along the King's Road and as far south as Castalia.

When the officer of the law laid his hand on Code's arm and spoke the words that meant imprisonment and disgrace in the very heart of the village festival, a groan went up that caused the officer to look sharply about him.

Despite the work Nat had done on his brief stop at the Head, Code was the hero of the day, for he had come in with the first cargo of fish and had won the distinction of being the first to effect the salvation of the island.

"Oh, let him go!" said a voice. "He ain't goin' to run away!" Nat, standing behind his captive, turned sharply upon the offender.

"No, you bet he ain't!" he snapped. "He's been doin' that too long already. He's got some-thin' to answer for this time."

Into the harbor at that moment swept the *Tanners' Rosan*, and abreast of her the steamer from St. John's. Five minutes behind came Jed Martin's *Herring Bone*, and the first of the fleet was safely in.

As the discontented and muttering mob followed Code toward the little jail back of the Odd Fellows' Hall, none noticed that the lovely schooner that had led the procession in was stealing quietly out again into the thick of the gale.

And those who did notice it thought nothing of it in the excitement of the moment, probably judging her to be some coaster who had run in to look for a leak. She had been tied up just ten minutes at the Mallaby wharf.

As the sorry procession passed the Schofield cottage, Code's mother ran out sobbing and threw herself upon him. She had not seen her son before

'(although orphan Josie had told her the *Lass* was in), for Code had been closeted with Boughton, and now her first glimpse of him was as an accused criminal.

But, regardless of watching eyes and public opinion, she walked all the way to the jail with him and went inside; and the two were absolutely oblivious to their surroundings, so overjoyed were they to see each other and so intimate was their companionship.

Along the edge of the crowd great Pete Ellinwood slouched, looking with dimmed eyes at mother and son.

"Ain't she the mother, though?" he said to himself. "Just like a girl she is — not a day past thirty by her looks!"

The jailer, who was regularly employed as janitor of the Free Baptist Church, opened the little house for his unexpected guest. It consisted of a room, fitted for sleeping, and a cell. These were not connected, but were side by side, facing the passage that ran through from front to back of the building.

Code was taken to the cell, and only his mother and Pete stayed with him to talk over the situation. It was determined to have Squire Hardy come over in the evening (it was now five o'clock) and give his opinion on the legal situation.

Ma Schofield went home and prepared her boy's

supper herself, and brought it with her own hands for him to eat. Code was in the best of spirits at his success of the afternoon, and had no fear whatever as to the outcome of his present situation.

Pete had gone away for an hour, and Ma Schofield had taken the dishes back home, when the detective came in, saying that a little girl who called herself Josie had come with a message.

Code asked to see her, and the great-eyed, dark little thing wept bitterly over him, for to her fourteen years he represented all the heroes of romance. Even as she passed him the message she knew that she could never love again and that she would shortly die of a broken heart.

Code kissed her, promptly forgot her presence, and opened the note.

It was from Elsa.

"Will be down to see you to-night at eight. Have sent a note to Nat in your name, telling him to be there, too. I think we have him on the hip, so be sure and have the squire and the officer present."

Code wondered vaguely how they had Nat on the hip, as he had been unable to find a single iota of proof to push home the case he and Elsa had built up against him.

The note brought him stark awake and eager for the conference. He had begun to drowse after a

good home dinner and sixty hours without sleep, but this acted like an electric shock. He was keen and alert, for he knew that this was the night of his destiny. Either he should triumph as he had in the grueling race, or he should have to face the ignominy of transfer and legal proceedings at St. Andrew's.

At half-past seven Squire Hardy, his round, red face fringed by snowy whiskers, came in. He dragged a chair into the passageway in front of the bar and was beginning a long and laborious law opinion when the detective, who had been to Mis' Shannon's boarding-house for dinner, returned.

The two began to fight the matter out between them when, at a quarter to eight, Nat came in, dressed in his best clothes and smoking a land cigar.

"Well, what do you want of me, Schofield?" he asked. "You sent for me, but you needn't try to beg off. I won't listen to it. Now, go ahead."

On the instant a feminine voice was heard outside, and a moment later Elsa Mallaby stepped into the little four-foot passage.

"Oh, how many there are here!" she said in a surprised voice. "Perhaps, Code, I had better wait until later."

"Hey, Roscoe!" sung out Code, hardly able to control his desire to grin. "Bring Mrs. Mallaby a chair." Roscoe obeyed and added two more, so

that all were placed within a small compass just outside Code's cell.

From Elsa Mallaby's first entrance Nat had observed her with a certain flicker of fear and hatred in his eyes. She, on the other hand, greeted him with the same formal cordiality she had used toward the others. Though utterly incongruous in such surroundings, she seemed absolutely at her ease and instantly assumed command of the situation.

"Excuse me," said Nat, who had not sat down and shifted from one foot to the other, "but Schofield sent for me, an' I would like to find out what he wants. I've got to go along."

"Schofield didn't send for you — I sent for you. There are several things about this imprisonment of Code that don't look right to me, and we may as well settle the whole business once and for all while we are here together. Now, Mr. Durkee," she said, turning to the detective, "would you mind telling me what the charge is against Captain Schofield?"

"To tell you the truth, ma'am," said he respectfully, "there are two charges out against him. One, by the insurance company, sues for recovery of money paid on the schooner *May Schofield*, and charges that the said schooner was sunk intentionally, first because Schofield wanted a newer boat, and second because the policy of the *May* was to expire

in a few days and could not have been renewed except at a much advanced rate."

"And the other charge?"

"Is for murder in the first degree, growing out of the intentional sinking of the schooner. Captain Burns is the complainant."

"Thank you." She flashed one of her radiant smiles at him and made him a friend for life.

"That was a great race to-day," she remarked irrelevantly, but with enthusiasm. "How much did you beat the *Nettie B*, Code?"

"A half an hour," he replied, mystified at the turn of the conversation.

"Well, that is a coincidence." She looked from one to the other. "It's exactly the same amount of time he beat you seven months ago when he raced the old *May* against the *M. C. Burns*, isn't it?" Her glance shot to Nat.

"Why, I believe it is, Mrs. Mallaby," he stammered. The quick transition to that painful and dangerous period had caught him off his guard.

"That was a great race, too," she said cheerfully, "and it's too bad you never sailed the second one. Especially after you wanted to bet so much. You thought you would win the second race, didn't you, Nat?" She was sweetness itself.

"Why, yes, I thought so" he admitted guardedly. "But I don't see what all this has got to do —"

"Well, it hasn't very much," she said deprecatingly, "but I was just interested. What made you so sure you would win that second race that you tried to bet?"

"Oh, I don't know," he answered easily. "I just had confidence —"

"In what, Nat Burns? Your schooner had easily been beaten the first time and she was notoriously slower than the *May*. Every one in the island knows that you can't sail a vessel like Code Schofield can, and that you are afraid to carry sail. To-day proved it. Anybody with half an eye could see that that stays'l was cut with a knife and didn't blow off. All these things being so, what made you so sure that you would win that second race seven months ago?"

Nat looked at her steadily. His nervousness had gone, apparently, and he was his old crafty self once more.

"That is none of your business, Mrs. Mallaby," he said insolently. "And now if you'll let me pass I'll keep an engagement."

"Mr. Durke," she said, "please keep Mr. Burns here until we have entirely finished."

"Yes, ma'am, I will," said the hypnotized man, and Nat, after a glare around upon the unsympathetic audience slumped down into a chair and smoked sullenly.

"Steady as she goes my friend," broke in Squire Hardy, looking at Nat. "Answer the lady's question. What made you think you would win?"

"I refuse to answer."

"He really doesn't need to answer," said Elsa. "I will answer for him. Code kindly let me have the log of the *M. C. Burns*."

Schofield drew the old book from his pocket and handed it through the bars. Then Elsa, opening it to the last pages, read aloud the few entries that Code had discovered that day when he was a prisoner aboard the *Nettie B*. As she read the silence was intense, but all eyes were upon Nat, who, startled at the sudden appearance of this document he had so long forgotten, chewed savagely upon his dead cigar. His face had grown pale and his rough hands were clasped tightly together.

"You see," said Elsa, when she had finished, "that Burns had determined upon the winning of his next race. It is perfectly clear, is it not?"

The breathless circle nodded.

It was a strange setting for the working out of the drama. Overhead a suspended oil-lamp flamed and smelled. Outside the crash of surf against the rocks came to them, and the wind whistled about the eaves of the little stone building.

"Now the mirror," she said to Code, and, still wondering, he handed the trinket to her. "Tell

about this," she directed him with a smile and a long look from her deep dark eyes.

And Code told them. He told of the time his father first gave it to him, of his experiments in astronomy, and of Nat's coveting the mirror. He told of that night after the first race when he had looked for the log-book of the *May* and had seen the mirror in its drawer. He told of its final discovery in the secret box of the storeroom on the *Nettie*.

As he talked the memory of the wrongs against him flamed in his breast, and he directed his story at Nat, who sat silent and immovable in the corner.

"If I found this aboard the *Nettie* it proves that he must have come and got it!" he cried. "He boarded the old *May*, but it was not for this that he came!"

"What, then?" asked Hardy.

"To damage the schooner so that she would break down under the strain of the next race," flared Code, facing Nat dramatically. Burns only clenched his jaws tighter on his cigar.

"You don't believe this, perhaps, squire, but listen and I'll tell you how the old *May* sank." And once again he described the crashing calamity aboard the overloaded boat as she struggled home to Freekirk Head with the last of her strength.

"You, squire, you've sailed your boats in your

time! You know that never could have happened even to the old *May* unless something had been done. And something *was* done! Burns had weakened the topm'st and the mainstay! "

All eyes were fixed on Nat, but he did not move. He was very pale now, but apparently self-possessed. Suddenly, with a hand that appeared firm, he removed the cigar from his mouth and cast it on the floor.

"That," he said with deadly coolness, "is a blasted fine plot that you have all worked out together. But every word of it is a lie, for the whole thing is without a single foundation in fact. Prove it!"

"I'll give you a last chance, Burns," said Elsa in a level voice that contained all the concentrated hatred that Code had detected in her before. "Dismiss these charges against Code."

"Never!" The word was catapulted from him as though by a muscular convulsion. "He murdered my father, and he shall pay for it!"

Without a word Elsa rose from her chair and walked back into the adjoining room. A moment later she reappeared, leading a beautiful girl who was perhaps twenty years old.

The effect was electric. The people in the little group seemed frozen into the attitudes they had last assumed.

Only in Nat Burns was there a change.

He seemed to have shrunk back into his clothes until he was but a little, wizened man. His face was ghastly and clammy perspiration glittered on his forehead in the lamplight.

"Caroline!" he cried in a hoarse voice that did not rise above a whisper.

"Yes, Caroline," said Elsa, her black eyes flashing fire. "You had forgotten her, hadn't you? You had forgotten the girl who loved you, that you drove away from the island! You had forgotten the girl that gave you everything and got nothing! But that has come back upon you now, and these people are here to see it. Even your father, in his log-book, mentioned when my sister left Grande Mignon, apparently to work in the factory at Lubec. As though my sister should ever work in a factory!"

"So this explains why she went that time," said Squire Hardy gently. "We all wondered at it, Elsa — we all wondered at it."

"And well you might. But he is the cause! And he wouldn't marry her! I have waited for this chance of revenge, and now he shall pay."

Caroline Fuller, who was even more beautiful than her sister, looked at Nat in a kind of daze. Suddenly there was a spasmodic working of her features.

"Oh, that I could ever have loved him!" she said in a faint voice. "Here, Elsa, read it to them all!"

From under her cloak she drew a crumpled envelope which she passed to her sister.

With a snarl like that of a wild animal Nat leaped from his chair toward the girl, but Durkee struck him violently and he reeled back into it.

"You swore you burned them all!" muttered Nat. "You swore it! You swore it!"

"Yes, and she did, the innocent child — all but this one that she had mislaid in a book you once sent her," cried Elsa. "But I found it, Burns. Where do you think I've been all this while? At St. John's, where she lives with my aunt. And do you think there was no reason for that letter being saved? God takes care of things like this, and now you've got to pay, Nat Burns! I knew there would come a time. I knew there would!"

She was still standing, and she drew the letter out of the envelope.

"Look, squire, Code, any of you who know. Is this Nat's writing?"

"Yes," they all declared as the letter passed from hand to hand.

"Read it," said the squire, forcing Caroline Fuller to sit down in his chair.

"I'll spare him hearing the first of it," said Elsa.

"It is what men write to women they love or feign to love, and it belongs to my sister. But here"—she turned the first sheet inside out—"listen to this."

Involuntarily they all leaned forward, all except Durkee, who went over and stood beside Nat. The latter gave no sign except a dry rattling sound in his throat as he swallowed involuntarily.

"I've got him, Caroline—I've got him!" she read. "He'll beat me again, will he? Well, not if I know it! Everybody in the Head seems tickled to death that he won, but you know how little that means to me. It is simply another reason why I should beat him the next time.

"Dearest little girl, it's the easiest thing in the world. I've just come back from going over the *May* (it's midnight), and the thing looks good. You know Schofield is a great hand to carry sail. Well, when you hear about the race, maybe you'll hear that his foretopmast came down in a squall. If you don't, I'll be much surprised, for I've attended to it myself, and I don't think it will take much of a squall.

"Maybe you'll hear, too, that his mainstay snapped and his sticks went into the water all because he carried too much sail. I shouldn't be surprised. I've attended to that, too. So I guess with his foretopmast cracked off and his mainstay snapped

the old *M. C.* ought to romp home an easy victor, if she is an old ice-wagon. I tried to get Schofield to bet, but he's so tight with his cash he wouldn't shake down a five-cent piece. Good thing for him, though, he doesn't know it. Nothing would do me more good than to get his roll, the virtuous old deacon!"

She stopped reading as a rumble of mirth went round the circle. Code in the rôle of a virtuous deacon was a novelty. Even the hard lines of Elsa's face relaxed and she smiled, albeit a trifle grimly.

"That's all," she said, folding up the letter and putting it back into the envelope. "The rest is personal and not ours. Now, Mr. Durkee, if you still care to consider Captain Schofield as the defendant in those two suits I want your arguments."

"I don't, Mrs. Mallaby," said the detective, and called the Freekirk Head jailer. "But I know who is going to take Schofield's place."

He glared at Nat Burns, who cowered silent and miserable in his corner. Despite his sailing as Nat's guest he had never brought himself to like the man, and now he was glad to be well rid of him.

Code stepped out a free man, and his first action was to take both of Elsa's hands and try to thank her. Her eyes dropped and she blushed. When he had stammered through his speech he turned to

Caroline Fuller and repeated it, but the sad smile she gave him tore at his heart.

"I came because Elsa asked me to save a friend," she said, "not because I wished to revenge myself on Nat. I am glad it was you, for I would do anything on earth for Elsa."

Code turned mystified eyes upon Mrs. Mallaby.

"I thought you did this to revenge yourself on Nat," he half whispered.

"I did, partly," she replied. She lifted her eyes to his and he saw something in them that startled him — something that, in all his association with her, he had never seen before. He stood silent, amazed, overwhelmed while she turned her face away.

CHAPTER XXX

ELSA'S TRIUMPH

CODE SCHOFIELD'S appearance at his schooner the next morning to help the crew unload was the signal for a veritable native-son demonstration. Not only had the story of Code's sudden liberation and Nat's as sudden imprisonment spread like wild-fire clear to Southern Head Light, twenty miles away, but the tale was hailed with joy.

For Nat had come into his own in the hatred of his townsfolk. Among the fleet he was heartily unpopular because he had not fished all season and then had tried to catch the first market with a purchased cargo, merely to revenge himself on Code and the Tanners. Throughout his conduct had been utterly selfish, whereas others had worked for the island and for its salvation.

With the landing of the two schooners from the fleet the women-folk were soon apprised of Nat's action, and, had it not been for Elsa's sensational disclosures in the little jail that made him the sudden occupant of a cell, there is no question but what

the women of Marblehead would have been equaled by the women of Freekirk Head; and Skipper Ireson would not have ridden down history alone in tarry glory.

But now, since Code was free, the whole town exulted, and there was a steady procession to the jail to look in upon the first real criminal the village had mustered in years.

Code, after checking the scale-tally all morning as his stalwart men swung the baskets of salted fish out of the hold, went along the road to Squire Hardy's house after dinner and interviewed that worthy man.

"You've got him where you want him," said the squire, "but you can't get much except damages."

"I don't want even damages," said Code. "I want him to take all his things and go away from here and never come back. Since he didn't do any *real* damage to anybody I don't care what becomes of him so long as he leaves here."

"Well, all you must do is to withdraw your charges against him — they were put in your name so that Mrs. Mallaby's would not have to appear."

"But even if I do, won't the State take it up. You know a murder case —"

"Yes, my boy, but this is no murder case now. On the face of it Nat did not set out to murder his father; he did not set out really to *sink* your

schooner — merely to disable it; the proof is indisputable and self-evident by his own confession and letter.

“Well, now, in a private racing agreement between gentlemen, if both vessels are registered and rated seaworthy, nothing that happens to one can be laid to the other unless, as in the present case, one deliberately damages the other. The principal punishment is a moral one administered by the former friends of the dishonest man, but the victim can collect money damages. Naturally the insurance company will change its charge so as to accuse Nat instead of you.

“They have a proven case against him already, and he will have to pay them nearly all they gave you — so that, in the end, he really pays you for the damage he did that day. Then, I understand, he is going to pay an amount to the family of each man who lost his life in the *May*, on condition that they will never sue him.”

“Whee-ew!” whistled Code. “When he gets through he won’t have much money left, I guess.”

“No, I guess he won’t,” agreed the judge, “and it serves him right. He’ll probably have to sell his schooner and start life over again somewhere else. I hope he starts honestly this time. Then you won’t take any action against him, Code?”

“Me? Oh, no!” said Schofield. “I’ve noth-

ing against him now. Let him go. But I'll tell you one thing, squire — he had better be smuggled away to-night quietly, because, if the crowd gets hold of him, it might not be good for his health."

The squire agreed and Code went back to his work. Late that afternoon Pete Ellinwood swung the last basket of the catch to the scales and Code completed his tally.

"Sixteen hundred and seventy quintal," he announced, "and forty-three pounds. At a hundred pounds a quintal that makes 167,078 pounds, and at three cents a pound totals to \$5,012.34. Not bad for a two months' cruise, but my soul and body, Bill Boughton, how the fish did run!"

"It's a good catch, Code, and fine fish," answered Boughton, who had been writing. "How will you have the money — in a lump or individual checks?"

"Separate checks." Boughton went back to his glass-surrounded desk to write them.

Code, being the sole owner of the *Charming Lass*, took two thousand dollars as his share, and the rest was divided almost equally among the other nine men, a trifle extra going to Pete Ellinwood for his services as mate.

"It was a toppin' haul," declared Pete jovially, slapping his well-filled pocket after a visit to the bank, "an' the rest of them poor devils won't get over two and a half a pound — some of 'em only

two, when there's lots of fish. Half a cent a pound is a pretty good bonus!"

Code had dinner with his mother that night, and appeared for it carefully dressed. What was his surprise to see his mother in her one silk dress.

"I'm going up to Mallaby House," he said in answer to her inquiring look. "But you! What's all this gaiety, mother?"

"I am going to hear an account of how you behaved yourself on the voyage, Code," she said, attempting severity.

"By an eye-witness?" Visions of Ellinwood, painfully arrayed, danced in his head.

"Yes."

"Um-m. Well, I won't be home until late, then, because it's a long story."

"You rascal!" said his mother, and kissed him.

On the way to Mallaby House (it was up the old familiar path that he had raced down so recklessly the night of the great fire), he thought over the thing that his eyes had seen for an instant the night before in the jail.

Elsa loved him, he knew now, and she had always loved him. He cursed himself for a stupid fool in that it had taken him so long to find out, but he was relieved to know at last upon what footing to meet her. She was no longer a baffling and alluring

creature of a hundred chameleon moods; she was a lonely girl.

Martin, who had been his body-servant while aboard the mystery schooner, opened the door, and bowed with decided pleasure at seeing his temporary master. He ventured congratulations that Schofield was free of the law's shadow.

"Mrs. Mallaby is up-stairs, sir," he said, taking Code's hat. "Just step into the drawing-room, sir, and I'll call her."

It was a sample of Elsa's taste that she illuminated all her rooms with the soft flame of candles or the mellow light of lamps. The mahogany furniture, much of it very old and historic among the island families, gleamed in the warm lights. There were built-in shelves of books against one wall, splendid engravings, etchings, and a few colored prints of the daughters of Louis XV.

Presently Elsa came down the broad staircase. Her hair was parted simply in the middle and done into two wheels, one over each pink ear. Her dress was a plain one of China silk with a square Dutch neck. It fitted her splendid figure beautifully.

Never had she appeared to Code so fresh and simple. The great lady was gone, the keen advocate had disappeared, the austere arbiter of Free-kirk Head's destinies was no more. She seemed a girl. He arose and took her hand awkwardly.

"I am glad you came so soon," she said; "but aren't you neglecting other people? I'm sure there must be friends who would like to see you."

"Perhaps so, but this time they must wait until I have paid my respects to you. As far as actions go, you are the only friend I have."

"You are getting quite adept at turning a phrase," she said, smiling.

"Not as adept as you in turning heaven and earth to liberate an innocent man."

"I have no answer to that," she replied. "But seriously, Code, I hope you didn't come up to thank me again to-night. Please don't. It embarrasses me. We know each other well enough, I think, to do little things without the endless social prating that should accompany them."

"You've been a dear!" he cried, and took one of her hands in his. She did not move. "Elsa, I want you for my wife!"

"What can I say?" she began in a low voice. "You are noble and good, Code, and I know what has actuated you to say this to me. Some women would be resentful at your offer, but I am not. A week ago, even yesterday, I should have accepted it gladly and humbly, but to-day — no."

"Since last night I have thought, and somehow things have come clearer to me. I have tried to do too much. I have always loved you, Code, but

I can see now that you were not meant for me. I tried to win you because of that love, not considering you or others — only myself. And I defeated my own end. I overshot the mark."

"I don't understand," said Code.

"Perhaps not, but I will tell you. In the first place, I deliberately managed so that Nat Burns and Nellie could never be married. I know now that they have separated for good. I hated Burns for his part in my sister's life, and I resolved to wreck his happiness if his engagement to Nellie was happiness. So now she is free and you can have her, I think, for the asking."

"But," cried Schofield in protest, "I have never said —"

"You did not need to say that you loved some one," she told him, with a faint smile. "That night at dinner on the schooner with me proved it. I have talked to your mother since I came home, and she told me what Nat's engagement meant to you, so that I know Nellie is the girl you have always loved. Isn't it so?"

"Yes," he replied gently.

"Now is it plain to you how I have undone my own plans? Two things I desired more than anything else on earth, you, and Burns's ruin. I ruined Burns and paved the way for the loss of you, for, unscrupulous as I am in some things, I could never

marry you when Nellie was free and you loved her. I have wanted happiness so hard, Code, that when I see others who have it within their grasp, I cannot stand in their way.

"But I don't mind now — I really don't. That was all in the past, and it's over now. If you want to make me happy, be happy yourself. I see there are forces that guide our lives that must have their will whatever our own private plans may be, and, having learned that lesson, I feel that perhaps now I shall be happier, somehow, than I ever would have been if my own selfishness had triumphed."

Code lifted her hand to his lips and kissed it.

"What a splendid woman you are! I know that happiness and joy will come to you. One who has done what you have done cannot fail to realize it. This hour will always be a very sweet one in my memory, and I shall never forget it."

"Nor I," she said softly, "for, through you, I have begun to find myself."

CHAPTER XXXI

PEACE AND PROSPERITY

THE village of Freekirk Head prospered once Code Schofield, Bijonah Tanner, and Jed Martin had started the ball rolling. Inside a week another large consignment of fish arrived. Boughton was ready for it, and for all that could come, he said, in the next two months.

This was music to the ears of Code Schofield and the crack crew of the *Charming Lass*, and nine days after they had picked up their mooring in the little crescent harbor they were off again, salt and bait-laden, for the Banks, expecting to do a little had-docking if they failed to load down with cod before they disappeared in October.

Seven schooners sailed with him that day, and, at the end of nine weeks, the *Lass* weighed anchor and charged home with the first halibut that had come into Freekirk Head in years. On this trip, when he was left in peace, Code displayed all the remarkable "nose" for fish that his father had had before him.

And when he had weighed out the last of his halibut Bill Boughton led him into the little office of

the fishstand and offered him a quarter interest in the business.

Thereafter Code was to make only such trips as he could spare time for, and Pete was to have charge of the *Lass* on other occasions.

He had proved himself worth his salt in the eyes of the whole village, and Boughton needed some one to do the heavy work, while he collected most of the profits. This business future, and three thousand dollars in the bank, led Code one day to send to St. John's for an architect, and to haggle with Al Green concerning the cost of a piece of land overlooking the blue bay.

The very night that Code and Elsa had their last talk Nat Burns was smuggled aboard a motor sloop lying in Whale Cove and taken over to Eastport, where he was turned loose in the United States.

Half of the value of the *Nettie* was eaten up by his debts and damage settlements, and so, the better to clear the whole matter up, he sold her at auction inside a week and departed with the remnants of his cash to parts unknown.

Since that time not a word or trace of him had been heard in Freekirk Head except once. That was when the St. John's paper printed a photograph of an automobile that made a trip across the Hudson Bay country.

Beside the machine stood a man in furs who was

claimed by all who saw the picture to be Nat Burns. Was he running a trap line in the wilds with the Indians, or was he a passenger in the car under an assumed name?

Elsa Mallaby did not even wait for the departure of the *Charming Lass* on her second voyage before she acted on a determination that had come to her. She shut up Mallaby House entirely, and, with Caroline as her companion, started on a trip around the world, promising to be back in three years.

But she did not go on the mystery schooner, nor did anybody ever see or hear of it again.

It soon developed that the government officials were hard after the boat that had impersonated a gunboat, and would make it very hot both for owners and crew. Elsa knew this the day she made her final triumphant dash into Freekirk Head, and that was the reason that the ship only stayed ten minutes.

So quietly and skilfully was the whole thing managed that, in the excitement of Code's arrest, every one thought Elsa and her sister had come on the evening boat from St. John's.

Not three men in the island would have connected her with this strange craft, and two of those weren't sure enough of anything to speak above a whisper. The third was Code Schofield.

Captain Foraker took the mystery schooner out-

side the harbor, pointed her nose straight south by the compass, and held her there for a matter of ten days. At the end of that time he was in danger of pushing Haiti off the map, so he went to Port-au-Prince and sold the schooner at a bargain to the government, which, at that time, happened to need a first-class battle-ship. Then Captain Foraker and the crew divided the money (by Elsa's orders), and returned to the States.

It was only after the return from his second cruise that Code paid attention to Nellie Tanner. Something in him that respected her trouble and Elsa's confession at the same time had kept his lips sealed during that short stay at home. But one Sunday after the second trip they climbed to the crest of the mountain back of the closed Mallaby House, and Code told her what had been in his heart all these years.

For a while she said nothing. The sun was setting over the distant Maine coast and the clouds all round the horizon were wonderful masses of short-lived rainbow texture. The sea was the pink and greenish blue of floating oil.

"You get me a trifle shop-worn," she said at last, laughing uncertainly.

"Then I get you?" He had turned toward her with a flash of boyish eagerness. One look at her radiant face and shining eyes found the answer.

"Shop-worn?" he said after a while. "Well, so am I, a trifle, but not in the way you mean. If having the down knocked off one and seeing things truer and better for it is being shop-worn, then thank God for the wearing.

"It has been a roundabout way for us, little girl, but at last our paths have met, and from now on, God willing, they shall go together. Come, I want to show you something."

They walked through the woods until they found the place where the surveyors had laid out the foundation plan for the little house. There they found an interested couple gravely discussing a near-by excavation with the aid of a blue-print.

Presently the couple turned around, and the lovers clutched each other in amazement.

"Bless me," gasped Code, "if it isn't ma and Pete Ellinwood!"

THE END

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